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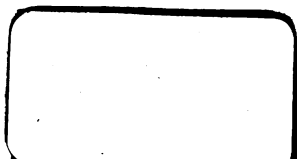
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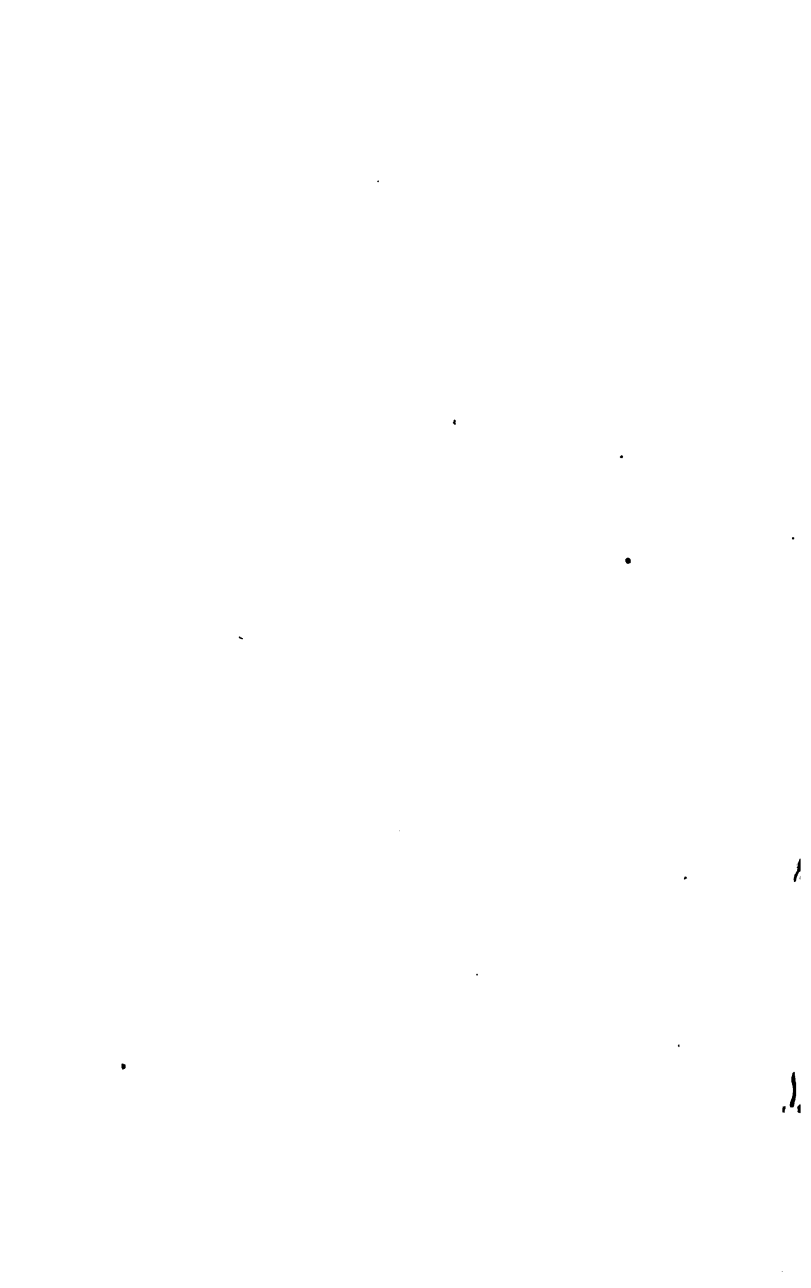
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10/22/1904



A MAN OF LEISURE



6

A MAN OF LEISURE

A PLAY

IN THREE ACTS

BY

DAVID LOWE

GLASGOW

FREDERICK W. WILSON & COMPANY

1903

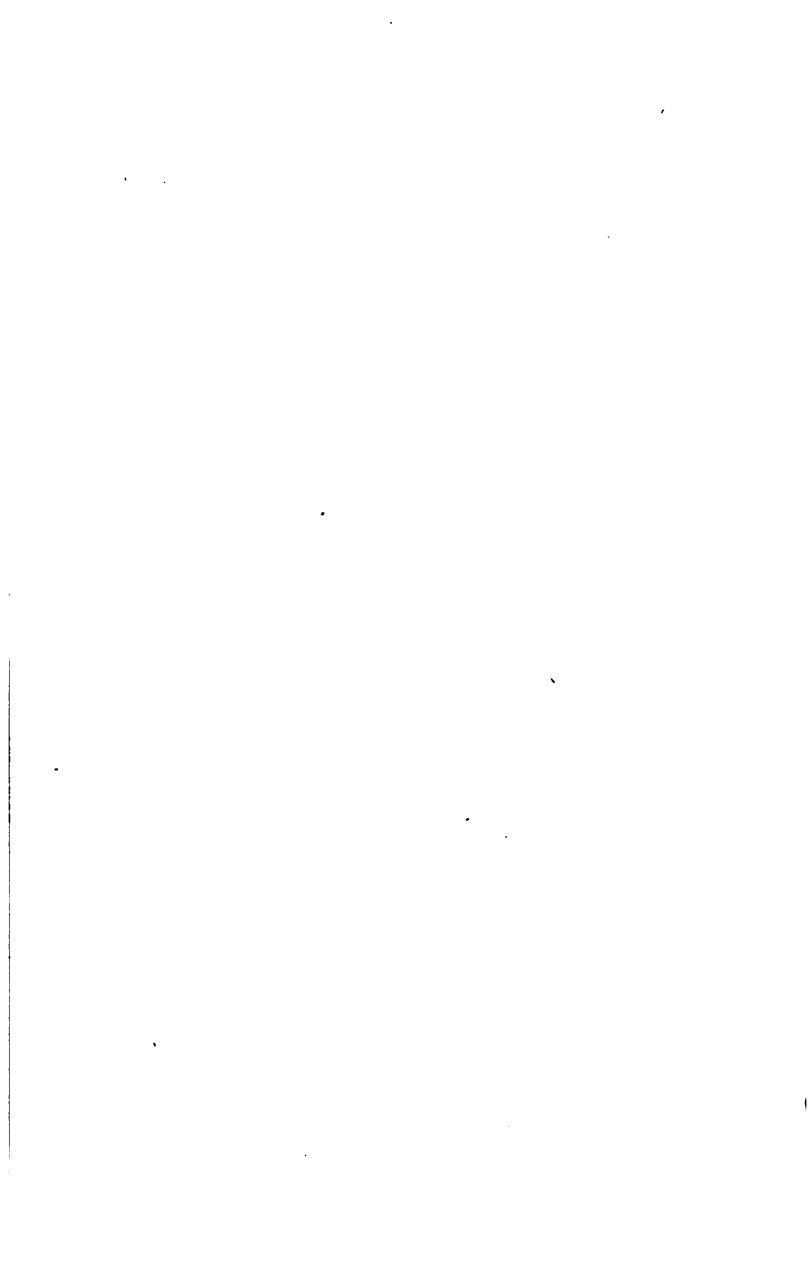
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DEDICATED
TO
THOMAS ARMSTRONG ALSTON



CONTENTS

ACT I

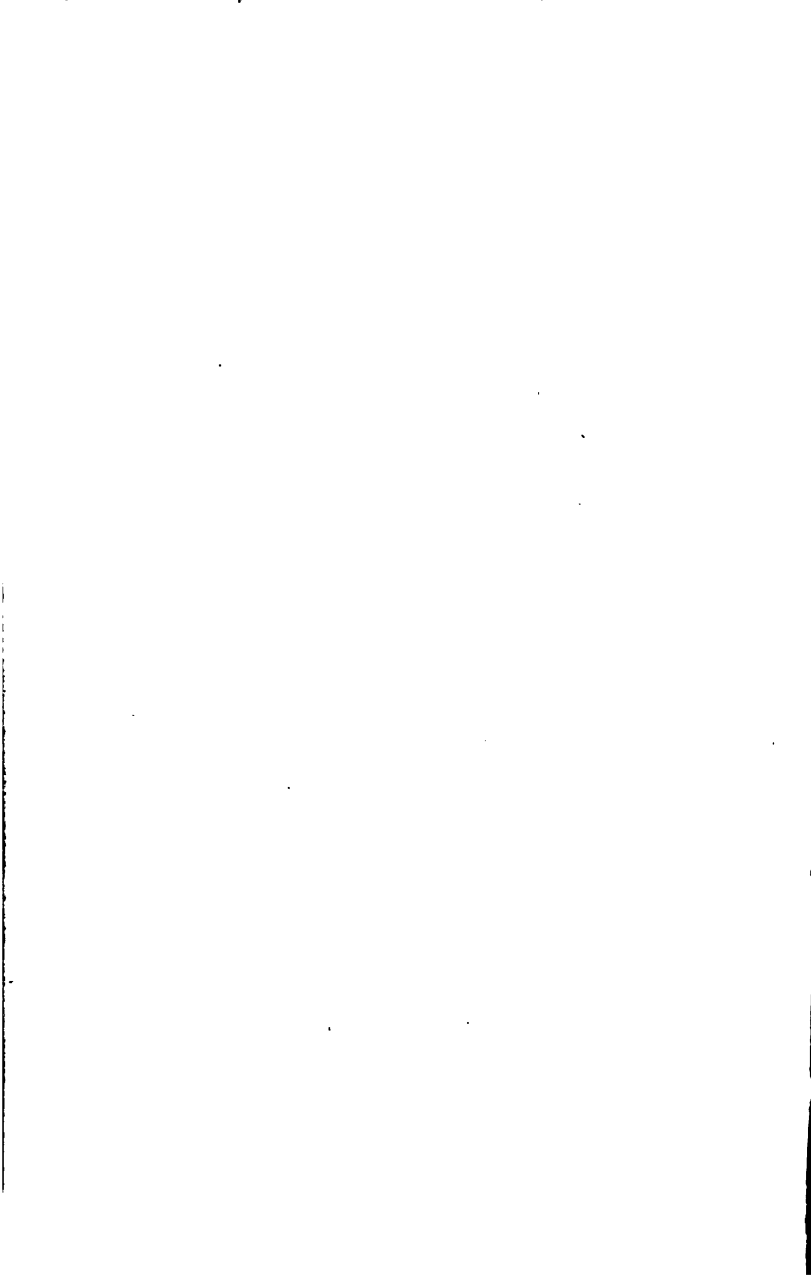
SCENE	PAGE
I. BALSILLIE FARM IN THE GAY TIME O' THE YEAR	3
II. NEAR BALSILLIE FARM—EVENING .	10
III. PROVOST BROOM'S PARLOUR . . .	21

ACT II

I. BALSILLIE FARM — SUNDAY MORN- ING	36
II. ROBERT OGILVIE'S ROOMS . . .	51

ACT III

I. ROOM IN A PUBLIC-HOUSE, GLAS- GOW	72
II. OGILVIE'S APARTMENTS . . .	87
III. ROOM OF A TWO-ROOMED HOUSE IN EAST END OF GLASGOW . . .	91
IV. BALSILLIE FARM - TOWN IN THE EVENING	99



"The play's the thing."

—*Hamlet*, i. 2.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHRISTOPHER GRAY, *a young farmer.*

EDWARD LOGAN, *a solicitor.*

PROVOST BROOM, *a successful mill-owner.*

ROBERT OGILVIE, *a man of leisure.*

DUGUID, *a servant (devoted to Christopher).*

MISS NELLIE BROOM, *heiress, daughter of the Provost.*

MISS MARY GILLESPIE, { *chum of Nellie Broom and one-*
time flame of Logan.

AGNES, *servant to Christopher.*

A coterie of Bohemians, etc., etc.

A MAN OF LEISURE

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Balsillie Farm in the gay time o' the year ; a field in stook during joyous day.*

DUGUID (*sorting stooks and soliloquising the while*). He's a rale auld-farrant chap that Maister Ogilvie. I like to hear him crack, he's sae chummy. Nae fause pride wi' him ; he doesna beck tae the laird and scowl at the beadle. We're a' tippenny pies here-aboot as far as he's concerned. An' what a man for kennin' things ! He can guddle, wrestle, and box ; yet he's as quiet and simple as if he couldna sook his ain thoomb. He's droll, clever, and he has God's amount o' siller—I wonder hoo some woman hasna mairried 'im ?

(*Sings*) "Scotia's queen tae sunny France
Has gane wi' a' her Maries,
Guid luck shall guide her every glance
And guard her gate wi' fairies."

I wish I could get the second verse o' that sang,
but I doot it's like honesty and a Manx cat's tail.
The first time I see Maister Ogilvie I'll speir at
him——

Enter LOGAN.

LOGAN. Here you ! Is your master about ?

DUGUID. I suppose you'll be aware o' the
time o' the year ?

LOGAN. It's harvest, of course.

DUGUID. Weel.

LOGAN. But that's no answer to my question.
I'm afraid the school board has much to do yet.

DUGUID. I doot you have been mair in-
debted to the tailor's board, and when you need
the strauchtin' board there will be few weet
hankies in the parish.

LOGAN. Your wit is quite elaborate.

DUGUID. Like a lawyer's account.

LOGAN (*testily*). Curse you for a saucy clod !
Am I to stand here all day listening to your
confounded drivel ?

DUGUID. It a' depends hoo ye like it.
There's naebody prigin' on ye tae bide. Be-
sides if ye canna stand a' day ye micht sit doon
awhile ; but maybe ye canna stand sittin' ?

LOGAN. Do try to talk a little common sense.

DUGUID. I wadna tak' an unfair advantage o' ye.

Enter CHRISTOPHER ; exit DUGUID.

CHRIS. Glad to see you, Ned ; how are you ? What's stirring in Leslie ? I've no time at all these days to cross the Laws to see my friends. Isn't it very warm ? Have you been in at the house ?

LOGAN. Morning.

CHRIS. You look displeased ! anything serious ?

LOGAN. Displeased ! No wonder. That Duguid of yours not only refused to answer a simple question, but he actually insulted me.

CHRIS. Ah, pay no attention to Duguid ; he's queer, you know, and he has odd notions of politeness.

LOGAN. The deuce he does. . . . Excuse me ; I should not have lost my temper, but everything's wrong this morning, and I'm a bit irritable. The fact is, Chris, I'm on the rocks.

CHRIS. That's bad.

LOGAN. Not another shot in the locker, and unless I can muster a fiver by to-morrow—the game is up.

CHRIS. Don't beat about the bush, Ned.

LOGAN. Well—can you oblige, old man?

CHRIS. I don't know what to say. You see—I hate to mention it—but I've obliged you already to that extent on many occasions these last two months. Mark you, Ned, I do not grudge it, but as I can see no reason why you should be in this position—and you offer no reason—I have misgivings.

LOGAN. Are you refusing me? Surely not. Back me this once—only once more.

CHRIS. I will, on one condition—that you assure me that you are going to use it for a good purpose and not to your hurt. I have not said this before; my misgivings prompted me now.

LOGAN. Take my word for it; that's all right.

CHRIS. Then come up to-night; I'll have it ready.

LOGAN. Thanks, Chris; you're a brick. By-the-bye, Mary will come with me for the walk, and her friend, Miss Broom, may be persuaded to come also.

CHRIS. I'll be glad to see you all. Ta-ta; I must hustle; we're very busy. [*Exit CHRIS.*]

LOGAN (*solus*). He's losing faith, and if that happens it will be a tough job to get any more.

Yet I must have money. I lose and win, lose and win, and lose and lose, but some day I'll win oftener than I'll lose. One can't enjoy the world without money, and one can't bet without it. I must have money—but how, and where? I must have it—bah! Here comes that human ferret. I'll go.

[LOGAN *as he departs passes* DUGUID;
they regard each other in an unfriendly manner.]

Enter ROBERT OGILVIE.

DUGUID. Hallo, Maister Ogilvie, it's a by-ordinar' guid mornin'.

OGILVIE. Just so, Duguid, and it's delicious for a lazy loon like me to watch you folk working.

DUGUID. Aye the bit banter! . . . Man, I had hardly dune thinking about ye when your head appeared abune the brae. Ye ken the auld saw: "Speak o' the de'il and he's sure to appear."

OGILVIE. The de'il? Duguid, that's rather sore on me. Besides, I understood the gentleman was dead and buried in Kirkcaldy.

DUGUID. We'll let him lie there, then. But

fine you ken the shoe wasna meent to fit you, and that like Macnab o' Trinity I spak' allegorical. By-the-bye, did you see that lawyer cratur' here?

OGILVIE. Mr. Logan? Yes, Duguid, he is just turning the bend now.

[They look towards the bend.]

DUGUID. Weel, if Chris lends his lugs to that bundle o' deceit ony langer, I'm gaun to break oot!

OGILVIE. Don't be hard, Duguid; Logan, like the rest of us, is entitled to his weaknesses.

DUGUID. Ay, and plenty o' them, but, man, there are some kinds o' devilry I canna thole. There noo, if love tak's the bit in her teeth, and lands a lad afore the Session, or when drouth grips at a man's thrapple fairly barkin' for a dram, I can forgi'e ower and ower again. They're things I've dune mysel'. But this Logan case is different.

OGILVIE. State the facts, Duguid. I'm an incomer.

DUGUID. It's like this. Logan fell cannily into his uncle's business (a fairly guid ane for a country toon), and I daursay the chield laid past siller the first three years he was in it.

But he begood to put on airs—God, Maister Ogilvie, unco few can cairry the fu' cup—he gaed to the hunt, he gaed far and near to pairties. By-and-by he took tae cards wi' a wheen fast country folk, and betimes he had a week's galavantin' in Auld Reekie, and just as he was gettin' tae the bottom o' the meal-pock, he begood tae horse-betting. His uncle's widow was daft enough to gie him clink when he ran short, and noo she's gey puir. For some time he's been nibblin' awa' at oor maister, who disna ken Logan half sae weel as I ken the Shah o' Persia's mother-in-law. Let them that will bet, bet ; but they maunna skin freends. I doot Logan will look at the mune till he fa's in the midden.

[AGNES *appears carrying a basketful of bread, etc., for the harvesters.*]

DUGUID. What are the lawyer tribe in Glasgow like ?

OGILVIE. Pretty much as other men. Some are upright and hard-working, some have an intermittent probity, others make money by company-promoting, and others, strange to say, seem to make a good living by borrowing each other's Post-office Directory.

DUGUID. It maun be fine tae jaunt aboot, as you're daein'—in Egypt, Italy, and sic-like.

OGILVIE. Happiness is in no locality, Duguid, unless we are rhythmic inside.

DUGUID. That's a deep ane. . . . Hey, Nannie, this way wi' the basket. (*Aside to OGILVIE.*) The best lass in a' braid Scotland. . . . You'll hae some eleven 'oors? (*To AGNES.*) Was it St. Paul, Nannie, that said, unless a man wrocht he couldna expect to eat?

AGNES. Yes, he wrote that from Athens to the Thessalonians—a winter's lecturing dinned the fact into my ears.

DUGUID (*slyly*). Then I doot Mr. Ogilvie will fare badly if we tether him to scripture.

AGNES. Oh no; Moses says we mustn't vex the stranger, and would it not be vexatious, Duguid, for a hungry man to sit and look at you eating? [*She hands OGILVIE bread, etc.*]

OGILVIE. Thank you, lassie; I'm not a Thessalonian, and I hope soon to be no stranger.

SCENE II.—*Near Balsillie Farm—Evening.*

CHRIS. Let us stand here. . . . How quiet it is. . . . It seems wrong to break the spell of silence.

NELLIE. List! What is that I hear?

CHRIS. It's the linn in the glen crooning lullaby to the night. . . . You remember when we gathered wild strawberries one summer's day together. It was in that same glen on a little island, around which the stream tumbled lazily.

NELLIE. These were schooldays.

CHRIS. Schooldays! . . . Days which outlive age. Days in which the tendrils of the soul seek out their tender attachments.

NELLIE. I remember the summer day in the glen distinctly. It often comes back. Weren't the berries delicious?

CHRIS. The stain of those wild strawberries will not be removed from my hands. It was the seal of nature to a spiritual bond, and ever since then your image accompanies me in all I do. . . .

NELLIE. The others come—shall we go?

[*Excunt both.*]

Enter LOGAN *and* MARY.

LOGAN. How infernally tedious this countryside becomes! I wouldn't give half-an-hour on Princes Street or Sauchiehall Street for a month of rural delight, so called. It's the same old blasted gossip about the minister, the manse,

children's ailments, rearing swine, deaths, probable parentage of unblest babes, weather, crops, and the scandals of the village choir.

MARY. There may be compensations, Ned, though for an active brain such as yours no doubt the place will sometimes be monotonous.

LOGAN. Monotonous! Why it's so monotonous that a dog-fight is an event to thank God on! And what might the compensations be?

MARY. Well, here at least your practice is made, and you would have no fierce competition to face as in the city; here you have a prominent place in society, whereas in the city you might get lost in a single street; here you have good air and time for sport—in the city, it would require incessant work for years to maintain a high rental and satisfy tax-collectors. And a city has so many temptations.

LOGAN. Better temptations than tedium.

MARY. Then you mean to go away?

LOGAN. I mean to go away.

MARY. Is Leslie so very dull, Ned? And haven't we been very happy these four years?

LOGAN. Of course, May, you've been devilish good and all that, but——

MARY. But?

LOGAN. But . . . I'm going away.

MARY. I know, I know ; you don't love me any more. I've dreaded this a long while. . . . Ah, I have been so foolish, so foolish. . . . What can I do, what can I do? . . . Mother . . . Mother. [*Weeps bitterly.*]

LOGAN. Hush, May ; Gray and Miss Broom return.

[*MARY hastily pulls herself together, and, with LOGAN, goes out at same side as they had entered.*]

Enter CHRIS and NELLIE.

NELLIE (*toying with a few stalks of grain*). How large the ears are and how full !

CHRIS. Ay, indeed ; nature has been generous ; she has streamed down warm sun, she has charged fair winds to round out and ripen the grain, even as your own sweet presence and winsome voice have brought my early dreams of you to gracious fulness. . . . Nellie?

NELLIE. Yes. . . . Let us go in.

[*They regard each other earnestly.*]

CHRIS. Nellie, you are everywhere, in everything, over everything—I love you, worship you. (*He stretches forth open arms, in which NELLIE*

becomes enfolded.) Is this not heaven? Why are you afraid?

NELLIE. Because I felt on the threshold of heaven and I feared, yet desired its beauty.

CHRIS. Our house at the farm has been dull enough since the old folks slipped away, the one so soon after the other, and I hope, Nellie, you will haste to make it radiant again. For sometimes it is lonesome, especially when the weather fails and I have to stay indoors; drabways, even though Duguid and Agnes do their best, and keep the house bien and tidy. You won't keep me waiting long? Say.

NELLIE. No, Chris, if I were to consider myself only; but my father—what of him? He would be left solitary. Just yesternight he fondly remarked how much to him I had recently become, how much I was filling my dead mother's place. I felt encouraged to be more and more dutiful.

CHRIS. So like you, indeed. Well, I must speak the Provost over, for assuredly some day sooner or later he will have to let you go. If you are indispensable to him, you are also very dear to me.

NELLIE. There is a matter, Chris, which my

father is sure to raise, even though he were won over to—to the idea of losing me. He would ask you to give up farming, he would stipulate that we should live in some big mansion, and all the rest of it.

CHRIS. I understand. He would have us take up a social position and establishment consonant with his reputation as a very rich man—a millionaire, they say. Well, I like and prefer my farm and its work, Nellie; and as for the Provost's money, I have no need of it. Nor do I grudge him his high social status. For me to assume a place in the world, without any useful purpose to occupy my energies, would be an evil. If you could live happily at Balsillie, then its stackyard and its pastures, with God's blessing, will provide for us and the folk who serve us.

NELLIE. With you, Chris, I am happy anywhere . . . anywhere, and forgive me for being prosaic. It was to forewarn you of the difficulties which my father, with all good intention, might set up.

CHRIS. Forgive? . . . Prosaic? . . . If to bless is to forgive, then are you forgiven, and there is nothing you can say or do that shall

ever be anything less than true adornment. (*He takes her hands, looking awhile deeply at her.*) How strange, strange! until now while regarding you I had never seen myself. And something golden and formless ascended over your head, a song without words or a flower unshapen or a disembodied joy.

[*Walking away slowly they are met by*
ROBERT OGILVIE. *No word is spoken,*
but on the part of both there is a grave
recognition.]

OGILVIE (*alone; hat in hand during soliloquy*). More rare than the breath of the hills is the spirit of this spot. It is more salutary than the atmosphere of rapid rivers. For a spell the gods have rested here. How great and simple and fragrant is the meeting of two hearts. Fortune's smile be theirs, and should fortune frown, let friendship woo the frown away. My chalice remains empty, yet there is pleasure in knowing that others sip the rich round wine. I remember surprising two young peasants in a Russian birchwood on an autumn day, a day when green leaves were paling. The girl's black hair was tied with a crimson band, her cheeks were wet, and her grey eyes

stood wide in childish wonder. The man's gaze was remote, as if he were trying to discover some landmark over the deep unsailed sea of new emotion. It was a memorable picture. Besides apologising to them for my accidental intrusion, I was inclined to apologise for my mere existence. . . . Nor shall the scene in Blythwood Square at Glasgow be wiped away easily. Frost was keen and stars gleaming. Along the shadowy streets two young lovers, meanly clad, had come from the squalors of Bridgegate. They were oblivious to all around, and when the high open square was reached, the lass with delicious naturalness gripped her shawl, and, laying her hand on his right shoulder, brought him within the faded covering beside her. She had seen signs of the coldness which he had fought all the way. . . . Love is fair everywhere. . . . Christopher, with her under your ancestral roof-tree and familiar fields, delighting in your labours, what is there more to desire?

Enter DUGUID.

DUGUID. You wad see them?

OGILVIE. Yes.

DUGUID. A by-ordinar' fine sicht. It's mair

B

like spring than the back-end to see sae mony pairs raking aboot. But I'm no against that lassie gettin' the maister; she's guid and considerate—tak's after her grandmither, who was a fine woman. . . . Is your mouth no' waterin', Maister Ogilvie? Hoo can ye keep clear?

OGILVIE. They are a splendid couple, Duguid, and I wish them luck. Now tell me how *you* kept clear of the lasses, you old rogue?

DUGUID. Man, they're kittle cattle. When I took them seriously, everything gaed wrang—gaed a' to wooden headstanes and brass fire-irons—till I actually thocht that the mair I hunted the harder they ran. I'm thankfu' for't noo. But when I didna fash aboot them, I was privileged to dance roon their noses.

OGILVIE. I doubt you haven't been what is called "a cannie man," Duguid, for he is the man whom women marry but do not court.

DUGUID. What is your opinion o' the average woman, Maister Ogilvie?

OGILVIE. The average woman is a slave and a saint; yet I never saw one such a slave to duty that she hadn't time to appreciate a scandal, and the saintliest woman on earth

cannot keep her temper when a shower of rain threatens her new summer hat. Yet they make this world homely.

DUGUID. And the average man—what think ye o' him?

OGILVIE. The average man, commonly known as the divine average, well—I won't call him names, but he has been known to enthuse and to effervesce over the subject of Old-Age Pensions; he welcomes the prospect of five shillings a week at the age of sixty-five, knowing, nevertheless, that the average life of a workman is only twenty-nine years. Yet 'tis they who keep the world wagging. And I will add this, Duguid, the finest production of man's efforts, singly or by association, is not equal to the worst human being.

DUGUID. Man, I like that. It's a grand conclusion.

OGILVIE. Now it is my turn to catechise, old man—what is your idea of happiness?

DUGUID. My work here, and a holiday like Watty Wilkie's. Watty said he had been holidaying at Leatham, a braw quiet place without kirk or jail, but blest wi' a big brewery. . . . And your idea o' dool, Maister Ogilvie?

OGILVIE. For absence of cheerfulness, a marriage of Christian endeavourers stands high, and a victorious Scotch tug-of-war team is also a solemn spectacle. . . . Seriously, Duguid, nothing saddens me so much as the ephemeral fleeting nature of beauty. The question of sin and such like don't trouble me, but my heart sinks at the sight of disappearing youth and the transitoriness of individual comeliness. Touch my coat pocket, Duguid.

DUGUID. Been at it again? They're big anes—guddled, I suppose?

[OGILVIE *takes several trout in rashes from his pocket and gives them to DUGUID.*]

OGILVIE. There now, there's a breakfast for you—yea, the sport of one who has been to the upland streams, and who has been called a Thessalonian.

Enter AGNES hurriedly.

AGNES. Duguid, men from Ingrie and Balquhomerie are waiting to see you about the harvest-home.

DUGUID. Aboot the kirn, lass? A' richt, I'm comin'.

OGILVIE. Good-evening, Agnes; you've walked fast and set your cheeks aflame.

AGNES. Good-evening, Mr. Ogilvie. Yes, I ran all the way.

DUGUID. Anent oor crack, Mr. Ogilvie, if ever ony woman had me in bondage it is the lassie who tak's me awa' noo, the daughter of a cronie o' mine who many years syne gaed to his lang, lang hame. Guid-nicht.

OGILVIE. Good-night.

AGNES (*softly*). Good-night.

OGILVIE. Good-night.

[*Exeunt DUGUID and AGNES.*]

OGILVIE (*alone, and looking after them*). She has soft eyes.

SCENE III.—*Provost Broom's Parlour.*

PROVOST. There is no evident reason behind your request, Logan.

LOGAN. Is necessity not ample excuse?

PROVOST. Scarcely, for a friend who needs help because of the buffets of fate and accident is not to be classed with the man who comes to his bottom through idleness and pleasure-seeking.

LOGAN. My dear sir, I don't want preaching; I only want your signature to a cheque for

£5000, to clear my debts and allow a fair start when I leave here.

PROVOST (*laughing*). I'm afraid less will have to do.

LOGAN. I don't intend at any time to live on empty nuts.

PROVOST. Come, Logan, consider your position—you say you are on the rocks. Well, that can be got over if you work your business as your uncle did before you. Keep your expenses within your income, avoid cards, and cease betting—and you're as right's the mail. It is still possible, even in these competitive times, to make money by industry and hard work, but you must work hard.

LOGAN. And it is also possible with less work and little risk to make a fortune. Modern morality as expounded by the law now reads: "Embezzle much and be punished little."

PROVOST. Your sentiments are the sentiments of the idler and gambler that you are!

LOGAN. Beware your words, Provost. Some natures are like bombs: handle them gently and they do no harm, but tread on them with an iron heel and they explode.

Enter NELLIE BROOM, carrying envelope containing telegram.

NELLIE. How d'ye do, Mr. Logan; your clerk called with this.

[Hands telegram to him and then retires.]

LOGAN *(after reading telegram)*. Just my luck! Damme!

PROVOST. Pardon me, Logan, but I hope there's nothing seriously wrong.

LOGAN. Listen, I'll read it for you: "Harebell, Fancyfree, Holdfast; Reindeer fifth place."

PROVOST. Well, what of that gibberish? What does it signify?

LOGAN. It means that I will require £200 more than I asked from you. At the great Ebor and the Yorkshire Handicap I had fair luck, and at Sandown Park, owing to rattling good information I made a pot, but during Doncaster week I kept plunging till I lost more than I had won before. This lot *(holds up telegram)*, when I heard that Reindeer was backed at 200 to 20, and that the stable was quite sure of pulling it off, I backed the mare, and hoped to come out on top again. Instead of which, Harebell, a rank outsider, came scampering in.

Damme, if I'd only thought of Harebell ! It was a 50 to 1 chance. The bookies will be walking on their heels.

PROVOST. And about the future ?

LOGAN. Well, I have a mind to try and recoup myself by a double event at the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire. . . . Yet if you get me out of the present hole, Provost, I'll promise never to take or to lay the odds again. Is it a bargain ?

PROVOST. It is not a bargain. I've seen nothing in your recent career to assure me that you would respect a compact of the nature you describe (*looking at his watch*). It is now six. I have an engagement with my manager in the library at this hour ; we are making alterations in the night-shift. . . . Excuse me for a few minutes. [*Exit PROVOST.*]

LOGAN (*solus*). It's a mean thing to do, but we live in an age of easy virtue and india-rubber conscience. I can squeeze it out of him, the hard old Pharisee ; the man who toiled himself into being a millionaire ! Humbug ! Honest labour doesn't bring a million in one man's time. I'll demand my own terms, which I mean to get, and by Heaven, if he refuses me

I'll turn his Provost's chain of gold into a felon's gyves.

[NELLIE BROOM *opens the door, walks slowly into the room, looking anxiously about her toward the floor, trying to find something lost, seemingly unconscious of LOGAN's presence.*]

NELLIE (*looking up from her abstraction*).
Ah! . . . Mr. Logan. . . . I was searching for a little black kitten, a neat, clean wee mite it is.
. . . It seems to have gone astray. [Exit.]

LOGAN (*solus, after a dead silence*). Ever since we became acquainted, and that is neither to-day nor yesterday, Nellie Broom has had an unexpressed but undisguised dislike for me, yet I rather fancy her now. I suppose because she loves Gray so much, she can't find time to dislike anybody. Certainly there's a something about her that is distinctly fascinating. Why not? . . . If I'm to play my best card against Broom why not set the stakes at the highest? She, an only child, would be a lovely investment. Then there's Gray—decent, good Gray, only he's too damned good for anything. He deserves her; but so do I, if I'm game enough to steal her. . . . Bah! It's

a dirty, treacherous thought too. . . . Yet . . . she's worth having in herself, and she has the money I sorely need. . . . Shall I do it? . . . I wish I had thought of this sooner.

Enter PROVOST.

PROVOST. Well?

LOGAN. Well, I have extended the scope of my resolution, and I propose now that you give me the hand of your daughter in marriage. I cannot afford to lose a moment.

PROVOST. If this is some practical joke, Logan, you are doing it first-rate.

LOGAN. It has no specially funny side, and as far as you are concerned it is more than serious. I mean to marry your daughter.

PROVOST. Then go about it in the fine old-fashioned way. If you woo her successfully, call again.

LOGAN. With debtors biting my heels I cannot come every day to woo. She must consent at once.

PROVOST (*laughing*). Logan, Logan—must! Where matters of the heart are concerned outsiders are helpless. I tell my lassie to like you, I tell my workers to wear silken overalls; both

musts are comic enough. Why, Logan, it is for you to arrange that affair with her. Women are not chattels altogether. Don't be foolish.

LOGAN. I know she would not listen to me. She has nature's backing in that.

PROVOST. Then there is nothing else to be said, though, frankly speaking, the whole conversation seems entirely uncalled for.

LOGAN. I'm only beginning.

PROVOST. All right, that's the proper spirit. Nothing equals tenacity; even in affairs of love it finds reward.

LOGAN. You misunderstand me; I mean we have only begun our talk.

PROVOST. Indeed! You are in a sinister vein to-night, Logan, and the tone of your address to me, a man in years, and an old friend, is unwarrantable.

LOGAN. That all depends.

PROVOST. Really you become unbearable. I think we had better say good-night, and part friends. Good-night.

LOGAN. Stay, not so fast. You remember Dick Allan?

PROVOST (*startled*). Allan! What an odd question.

LOGAN (*menacingly*). You can understand me now.

PROVOST. I begin to fear, Logan, that you have been tilting your little finger.

LOGAN. You pretend ignorance.

PROVOST. I don't even require to pretend ; it appears to me you are not altogether yourself. Be explicit.

LOGAN. You shall not complain on that score. Read !

[LOGAN *hands the PROVOST a document.*]

PROVOST (*visibly concerned*). Where did you get it ?

LOGAN. Among my uncle's papers, when I was sorting out stuff yesterday in view of my departure.

PROVOST. And why do you bring it here ? To torture me ? Or is it possible, can it be possible, that you mean me to keep it for destruction ?

LOGAN. To be burned, if you give me your daughter ; refuse, and there is the torturing alternative.

PROVOST. Logan, you are a beast !

LOGAN. Provost, it is a case of kettle *versus* pot.

PROVOST. I will pay you the sum mentioned earlier in our conversation—for baiting a friend, shall I call it?

LOGAN. 'Tis the lass, and not the lucre alone, that shall buy me off.

PROVOST. Come, Logan, have mercy. It is death to me if it comes out, and you can save me by simply allowing everything to go on as usual. Why rake up the past?

LOGAN. I have stated my price, and, idler and gambler as you called me, I won't preach at you. What is your answer?

PROVOST. Answer? If you will not take money alone, then—yes, here is my answer.

[Runs to the fire, intending to thrust the document into it.]

LOGAN. Please don't trouble to burn it; I had bargained for such an emergency. Look at it closely, and you will notice it is a newly-written copy. Speak quickly; some one comes—what is your answer?

PROVOST. She shall be yours; curse you!

LOGAN. Thanks. Bring her to Thornton in time for the fast train to Edinburgh. The ceremony can be celebrated in the morning, and we can be back before the town is

thoroughly awake. It must be gone through at once, or there will be the devil to pay. [*Exit.*]

PROVOST. In any case there will be the devil to pay.

Enter NELLIE.

NELLIE. It grows dark, father ; I shall light the candles.

PROVOST. Nay, child, let us remain in the grey darkening. I have something very serious to tell you.

NELLIE. Yes, father.

PROVOST. Mr. Logan, who, you would observe, was with me for a while, has asked me to be allowed to offer you his hand.

NELLIE (*with indignation*). Mr. Logan ! . . . Why, why . . . is he mad ?

PROVOST. Don't be angry, little one.

NELLIE. Angry ! Why, Mr. Logan is as good as betrothed to my friend Mary ; and how dare he wrong her and insult me in such a manner ?

PROVOST. Listen, my dear. Mr. Logan loves you. . . . He made a mistake about the other. . . . He is not a bad fellow . . . and, in fact, I have led him to expect your consent.

NELLIE. Oh, father, how could you! . . . I never liked him, and, indeed, rather disliked him. And more . . . I wish so much to tell you, father, that my heart is not mine to give. . . . I love Mr. Gray, and we are so happy.

PROVOST. Ah! . . . indeed . . . my poor girl . . . I had not bargained for this. What shall we do? . . . I am so torn and weary. It is all over. . . . How kind it is that your mother is dead!

NELLIE. You are in trouble, father?

PROVOST. I am sorely pressed, and you alone, my dear child, can save us. . . . If the choice lay between the renunciation of your affection and the rescuing of your father from public dishonour, which should you choose?

NELLIE (*pale with terror*). And it cost me all in the world—your honour and peace . . . but on one condition—that you have trust in me, to tell me for what the sacrifice is made.

PROVOST. Infinite trust. . . . But it's hard to explain. . . . Very.

NELLIE. Kiss me, father. . . . I am ready to hear.

PROVOST. About eighteen years ago, when you were a sunny child of four, your mother

(God bless her !) and I entertained a great deal ; the mill made profits enough to meet it all, but nothing more. Hot with the pride of life, we longed for new social worlds to conquer, and the fact that trade's taint kept us out of a certain circle who despised mere buying and selling, put the idea into our heads that if we could buy an estate in the country it would help to break down the barrier. Ultimately we bought Inchdarnie, in which we were never happy. . . . I sold it after your mother's death because it was a monument to my folly and degradation. . . . Where did I get the money? Well, that's the cause of our being here now. At that time I was steadily supplying the market with paper to be made into bags—you know the thing—for tea, pastry, flour, sugar, and a hundred other articles. One day, Dick Allan, my head machineman, who had been my faithful assistant from the start, dropped a hint that he was on the eve of a discovery. Soon the neighbourhood was full of a wonderful invention of Dick Allan's. By his invention, paper fed in at one end was thrown off at the other end in bags of any size required—folded, pasted, and ready for merchants. There was a fortune in it.

NELLIE. I hadn't heard of Mr. Allan before. . . . What became of him? Did he squander his fortune?

PROVOST. After completing his creation, Dick drank very hard. I had been alone at the office one night when I heard unsteady footsteps. It was Dick. I helped him into the office intending to give him advice, and perhaps a reprimand; when suddenly an evil voice whispered "patent" to me. I knew its money value and how it could further our social triumph. I induced Dick to talk about it, and drunk as he was he could elucidate every point. To show how one pinion acted he threw over to me a sheet of paper. It was the complete and only design. As I looked it over the temptation grew. The heat of the room had affected Dick, and he began to nod. Some useless papers lay on the desk near, and as the risk was too great to take time to make a copy, I slipped the useless papers into his hand, and retained the invention. He instinctively thrust the paper into an inside pocket. I turned out the light and helped him on his way. . . . To rehearse it now, after all these years, is an awful task. . . . Each act of that night has in my secret thought

revived itself continually all these years. . . . Miserable coward that I have been, and continue to be!

NELLIE (*slowly and painfully*). Did he not charge you with taking it?

PROVOST. Dick? No. . . . He was too proud to retaliate; besides, who would believe such a story against a man in my position, a churchman and an employer. They knew that Dick invented the machine which has made this valley a hive of industry and made me a millionaire, but they also believe that Dick sold it to me. What more natural than that his employer should buy it?

NELLIE. And what has this to do with Mr. Logan?

PROVOST. Dick wrote me a letter. Logan has a copy of it and means to use it against me unless . . . well, you know his proposal. Logan is desperate.

NELLIE. Was Dick's letter threatening?

PROVOST. Here is a copy. Read it aloud so that I may once more worship the man I wronged.

NELLIE (*reading letter*). "Since last Friday, when you stole my drawings, I have waited to

allow you time to undo the deed. You know my principle—resist not evil. Time will avenge. I had the joy of creation, which is perhaps enough reward. I go to Leven to-day and a permanent man for my place is desirable.” . . . And the end of this great soul?

PROVOST. Within five weeks he was dead.
. . . Poor Allan!

NELLIE. So that Mr. Logan is the only one who shares your secret?

PROVOST. Logan only.

NELLIE. Then, as the pleasure of creative work was Dick's reward, perhaps the joy of sacrifice will suffice for me. And time will avenge both. . . . You have always been good to me, father; I would give my life for you.
. . . When we go away I must never return.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*Balsillie Farm—Sunday morning—
Chimes in the distance — OGILVIE and
CHRISTOPHER are standing on the road.*

CHRIS. In these bells there is a melancholy tone which I had not observed before. I wonder if they affect all people in that way; and they should have sounded otherwise, for I think I'm very happy.

OGILVIE. The contradiction between the bells and yourself proves one of two things—either that you are a sage, or that another old proverb has gone wrong.

CHRIS. Expound, man, expound.

OGILVIE. It has been written: "As the fool thinks, the bell clinks."

CHRIS. I shall not dethrone the proverb.

OGILVIE. Bells on a Scottish Sunday cannot consistently call forth other than melancholy thoughts. Foreigners who have experienced

several Scottish Sundays invariably thereafter view their future life with equanimity.

CHRIS (*pointing*). There, there he is, the lark. What a strong wing! But he doesn't sing when he gets to earth.

OGILVIE. Neither do poets.

CHRIS. Did you ever hear snipes?

OGILVIE. Ah, yes; they make a peculiar sound.

CHRIS. The sound is caused, when they are high in the air, by their wings. It is like the bleating of lambs. And a whaup, have you heard it?

OGILVIE. Haven't I! I'll believe in liberty as long as I can hear a whaup at midnight. I like the heron's cry, too; but it has a strain of fear, as if capitulating some dear spot. Not so the whaup; the whaup is wild freedom. And freedom, as I have heard, is more than bread, and when men come to believe *that*, there will be plenty of bread for all.

OGILVIE. By-the-bye, you have seen Miss Broom.

CHRIS. A clear case of telepathy! I've been thinking of her since we met, and eager, though backward, to tell you of that eventful night.

OGILVIE. The sphere around you told me the story as you passed silently by with her. . . . I'm proud of your happiness, Chris.

CHRIS. That's like you. . . . Wasn't she charming? She has taught me what it is to live. . . . Time and again I wake up to a state of complete delight, then . . .

OGILVIE. Yes?

CHRIS. Then . . . the overcast is here again.

OGILVIE. Overcast?

CHRIS. I will tell you. . . . As I become conscious of my great prize, a faint whisper comes from the world invisible, breathing a suggestion of doom. It stifles me like the air before fire and thunder.

OGILVIE. I'm afraid you have become over-sensitive, Chris.

CHRIS. No, it's not that, it's not that; but a shadow flits past, and for a second it can become night at noon. These bells are pealing omen. . . .

Enter DUGUID.

DUGUID. Miss Gillespie is up at the hoose for you, maister, wi' een as red as collops.

CHRIS. There must be something amiss,

DUGUID, that she should call on a Sunday morning. She sent no message?

DUGUID. I volunteered to tak' ane, but she wants to see yoursel'. She's awesome begrutten and oorie-like. I never was sae wae for human flesh a' my life.

CHRIS. I'll go at once. Keep Mr. Ogilvie company, Duguid, till I return. . . . I hope it's nothing serious, Robert. . . . [Exit CHRIS.]

DUGUID. When women greet there are broken brigs to mend.

OGILVIE. And who has destroyed the viaduct on this occasion?

DUGUID. Logan, I wad say; he coorts that lassie Gillespie, they tell me. She maun be keen o' a man to look at Logan, and rife o' water to wat her cheeks for him. He has only a character for having nae character.

OGILVIE. You're not going to church, Duguid?

DUGUID. No, man; I've twa or three things to dae aboot the toon, and I'm awfu' for sleepin' in the kirk, onyway. You're not going there either?

OGILVIE. I don't go often. Modern religion has a bald head, and I fancy Calvinism must

have had a crooked nose. The last time I was at church the minister impressed on us that the world was most disagreeable to live in—like a smoky house. Now if the earth is a smoky house which you cannot leave at will, would it not be wise to let in some fresh air by some means, instead of merely exercising patience to bear the smoke? I don't feel smoked.

DUGUID. Reek or no reek, I ken some Christians in this parish who are mighty anxious about baith worlds, and I'd rather live on bean bread and boar bacon than stand in their shoes.

OGILVIE. They may be candles lit by the Lord, Duguid, but composed of inferior tallow. . . . No, the game of grabbing both worlds won't do. It is beautiful to see an innocent child chase an illusive soap-bubble, but when grown-ups seriously attempt that tomfoolery, the spectacle is painful and ridiculous. . . . And the pews not unseldom contain good men of the worst type—those who are consciously good.

DUGUID. Guid and kens o't! Ay, that's bad. Yet that breed get big tombstones, and mony lees about them are cut oot on marble. They canna possible live up to it where they're

gaun. . . . Aiblins, the second generation of their descendants may be ta'en in wi' the stanes tho'.

OGILVIE. We are all on the pounce at posterity, more or less, Duguid. Is it not enough that we have a little daily bread, a little work, a little liquor, a little thoughtless play, and betimes a little love at eventide?

DUGUID. Ay, man! a little liquor and a little daffin'—the idea mak's me twenty years younger. (*Enter AGNES, passing on her way to church.*) Weel, Nannie, you're as bricht's the mornin'. . . . Did you let oot the kye before you left?

AGNES. Yes . . . except the big brown-and-white cow; I think she has caught a weid.

DUGUID. No' unlikely. . . . It's a guid coo and worth carin' for.

OGILVIE. If Duguid will allow me—I see you have come away without a flower.

[*He hands the rose from his coat to AGNES.*]

AGNES (*shyly*). Thank you.

[*She moves slowly away, carrying the flower in her hand timidly.*]

DUGUID (*jokingly to AGNES after she is some yards away*). Dinna forget the collection,

and dinna sleep. (*Exit AGNES.*) Man, twa robbers ance broke into the auld kirk, and a' they got was a defaced threepenny bit, and ten days in jail. What fools to rob a kirk!—as weel try to rob me. . . . I wonder who put in that bad threepenny. . . . It's a queer business, religion.

OGILVIE. Religion, Duguid, sits at the right and art at the left hand of love. Art is the conquest of labour and sorrow; religion is the endurance and acceptance of these. . . . I have been all over the world, Duguid, but only to find that the longest journey a human being can take is neither by land nor by sea, but by way of thoughts and feeling into the region of the soul.

DUGUID. And what's for an auld man like me, who never was oot o' the parish, and wha canna cleek one idea into anither?

OGILVIE. I think God will send everything to you, Duguid, as he sends sun and rain to the earth.

DUGUID. That may be; God's gey clever. . . . Ay, Providence has aye been guid to me. For instance, in my wild days, when I was put in Cupar jail for poachin' I couldna tak' the prison porridge. I asked the warder what he wad dae wi' the porridge if I didna sup them.

"We'll gie them to the hens to pick," said the warder. "Then," said I, "gie them the oakum to pick as weel." He took it in fun and we became freends. That was purely Providence at wark. . . . The world is no sae bad at a', although sometimes I think it was far better when we only soopit the flair at Yule, and were a' as hearty as weavers at a funeral.

OGILVIE. It's the mood, old man. At one moment we feel as if we were living in the era of the sow and small talk; and anon we echo the children singing at school, "The world is very beautiful and full of joy to me."

DUGUID. Weel, man, I needna grumble, for I've aye had health. I never had lance in my leather nor salt in my blether. . . . And noo, Maister Ogilvie, I want ye to read this letter. The envelope is a wee crumpled and yellow, but we a' get that way wi' age; and read it oot to me for auld langsyne. What altho' it's Sawbath; the better day, the better deed.

[OGILVIE *reads aloud.*]

"LEVEN, *Tuesday.*

"MY DEAR DUGUID,—A month at the sea-side has done me no good, and in spite of the

doctor's blarney (he assures me I am doing splendidly), I know that I will soon be promoted to twang a heavenly harp if I am good enough. When one looks back on it, life seems little else than a leaky memory.

"Although I have been happy in my friends and jovial in my cups, yet I never seemed to get hold of the right string. Now, Duguid, you always stood by me when I was drunk or sober, and I know you will stand by those who belong to me. To-day I have transferred what little savings I possess to your name at the bank, which I leave for you to disburse at your discretion in the bringing up of my little lass. I enclose a sealed letter for her should she reach the age of eighteen—if she doesn't, then just burn the damned thing. . . . Thirty-five and played out—what a text for the moralists! Good-bye, Duguid. I always liked you. Good-bye. Ever yours,

"DICK ALLAN.

"P.S.—You see I take it for granted that there are a score of summers to smile on you yet!"

OGILVIE (*looking up*). Remarkable letter! Did he survive?

DUGUID. No . . . no. . . . He was a graund chap, Dick ; he had a game free spirit and a capital head—but, puir chiel, there was ower much fire in him, and he wasna guid o' guidin' himsel' !

OGILVIE. It is the mistake of genius, Duguid, to think it is strong enough for anything, whereas, indeed, it is weak enough for anything.

DUGUID. That's aboot it. . . . I used to think as often aboot him as of a seed in my tooth, and I could aye see ayont his fau'ts. Dick had a queer death. The doctor said there was nae speceefic trouble aboot him. He joked wi' everybody ; he even bantered the doctor. In death he was sae fresh and roond, that it looked as if his spirit had just gi'en its body the slip. . . . Ay, man, but he was awesome sad whiles.

OGILVIE. And what came over his child ?

DUGUID. She has lived to be a woman and to be a constant pleasure tae my een ; in fac', she's eighteen the day, and she's at the kirk.

OGILVIE (*quickly*). Agnes ?

DUGUID. Ay. . . . It was to ease my mind that I spak' aboot the letter. I maun speak to her the nicht ; a body canna come speed abcot

anything serious through the day. . . . Yet I feel to gie the lassie a pig in a poke, for I've nae notion what's in her faither's letter.

Enter CHRISTOPHER, dishevelled and distracted.

OGILVIE (*exchanging glances with DUGUID*). Good-day, Duguid; I hope the brown-and-white cow will come round all right.

[*Exit DUGUID, regarding his master sadly.*

From here to the end of the scene, the faint music from the distant church is heard.]

CHRIS. Ah, Robert, the overcast indeed has come, and the clouds are dark as death. I cannot tell you how it came to pass.

OGILVIE. What's the matter, old chap?

CHRIS. The flame of joy that lamped my life now burns and consumes me.

OGILVIE (*taking CHRIS by the hand*). What's the matter, old chap?

CHRIS (*desolately*). She has gone away. . . . She. . . . I am very tired. . . . Away. . . . Is it the end? How unreal everything seems! . . . How that girl did weep!

OGILVIE. Miss Gillespie? She has brought bad news?

CHRIS (*with sudden calmness*). Logan and Miss Broom were married yesterday.

OGILVIE (*startled*). What's that? Married? It cannot be, or God has gone to sleep! She loves you—oh, surely nothing so utterly shameless can have happened when she loves you.

CHRIS (*clenching his fists, and walking to and fro with sudden energy*). If I had Logan here! The cur, the serpent of hell! I shall never rest till we have it out, though I should swing for it. Has he not eaten at my table? Have I not shared his troubles? . . . Is there no one trustworthy and true? I dare not look into my soul, for I'm sure something cries out for his blood. My head is teeming with black thoughts. And that poor girl of his, mother of heaven, how she wept! Wept for an abominable sneak!

OGILVIE. Think not of violence, Chris; it is the first resort of the savage, but it is the last resort of the cultured man. Nor harbour the idea of revenge: there is a provision in the divine economy for dealing with these things. I can dimly understand the pain you suffer, and how little mere words can do to salve it,

but, I pray you, leave vengeance to Him who sees every circumstance in the case.

CHRIS. Words, nothing but words—you can never appeal to a cur like Logan, unless through his miserable hide.

OGILVIE. I make no defence of Logan, Chris—his was a foul offence—but do not act under the influence of passion. I have heard it said that patience pays.

CHRIS (*fiercely*). Patience be damned! . . . (*Wearily*.) And to think that she whom I worshipped and set above the whole world should prove heartless and false!

OGILVIE. In your best self, Chris, you cannot believe her to be heartless and false. You speak the language of pain.

CHRIS. Then how shall we describe what she has done?

OGILVIE. I do not know, old chap, but we must not judge her harshly. Consider for a moment. Logan has deserted Miss Gillespie. She was poor; he was in deep water; he has run away with Miss Broom—pardon me for linking their names together—Miss Broom is likely to be rich. She does not like him, and she knows how long he has courted Miss

Gillespie ; moreover, she assuredly loves you. Then why should she do this thing? She must have been forced. Who could force her? Her father alone. . . . He does not trust Logan—then why should he arrange this thing? Because Logan demanded it. And why should he yield to Logan? That is what has to be found out. Time will tell.

CHRIS. We were so happy for a little while !
. . . You still believe her true, Robert?

OGILVIE. Yes, I do ; and we must exercise charity. Is it not written—"Though I speak with tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing"?

CHRIS. You say well ; yet I have heard it said that all women are changeable.

OGILVIE. Nay, nay, Christopher mine, woman loves long and much, and suffers much and long. They who love, suffer. Woman can garner as much true affection in her little finger as we men can hold in our whole anatomy.

Woman seals up her treasures till the coming of her real and rightful lord, no matter to whom, as a possession, necessity may have handed her over.

Enter DUGUID.

DUGUID (*handing CHRIS a letter*). On the brae I met the Provost's servant—she gae me that. [*Exit DUGUID.*]

CHRIS (*after reading the letter, exclaims*). Thanks, thanks, thanks; you were right, Robert. I must not think unkindly of her. Read it, Robert; read it! [*Hands letter to OGILVIE.*]

OGILVIE (*softly and reverently*). "My dearly beloved, when you hear what I have done, forgive. Yours for ever, Nellie."

CHRIS. Why did I doubt? Why did I doubt? Heaven keep her, my poor lost joy.

OGILVIE (*returning the letter*). Treasure it, Chris; it is a breath of sacrifice—the sacrifice of a great woman.

SCENE II.—ROBERT OGILVIE'S *rooms*—ROBERT
discovered writing at a table — Books,
fishing-rods, golf-sticks, guns, etc., lying
about.

OGILVIE (*solus*). It is finished ; and now I could almost do a jig. A good shout would go high too, but that would alarm the neighbours. . . . Perhaps a sympathetic friend would be more welcome than anything. . . . To attempt, is human ; to complete, divine. Since I began to work on the farm each day with Duguid, I find it much easier to write in the evening. The influence of the earth and its herbs and grasses and animals, and the daily physical exertion, cleanse and refresh one's mind. . . . So my book is written. I wonder how it will fare ? . . . (*Knocking is heard at the door.*) . . . Some village youth, I suppose. Come in. (*Enter AGNES.*) Agnes ! What a delightful surprise !

AGNES (*looking round*). Is Duguid not here ?

OGILVIE. No ; but if you were trysted to meet him here, he will not disappoint you. Here is a chair for you. Come near the fire ; it is cold to-night.

AGNES. We came from the farm together.

He had business with the bank agent, and as I had to see the merchant who sells our butter and eggs, Duguid said he would wait for me here, as he intended seeing you after the agent.

OGILVIE. Then something has detained him. He will come soon; meantime, make yourself at home. . . . Surely Providence has directed your steps here, Agnes.

AGNES. Why do you say that, Mr. Ogilvie? Does He not direct all things?

OGILVIE. Yes; but before you came in I had been wishing for the presence of a sympathetic friend.

AGNES. I hope you are not unhappy.

OGILVIE. It's the other way about, for I had just overtaken a big task, and I wanted to share with a friend the pleasure I felt. . . . I have finished my book!

AGNES. What book?

OGILVIE. One I have been working at for the past five years, dealing with certain lessons of History.

AGNES. I would like to read it during the long fore-nights.

OGILVIE. And so you shall some day . . . but I have been learning other lessons more recently.

AGNES. Where from?

OGILVIE. From you—lessons in Happiness.

AGNES (*smiling*). I thought you were going to say lessons in Agriculture.

OGILVIE. Well, I have had these also. Now I can hold the plough, I can dig potatoes, grave potatoes, I can sow wheat, can milk a cow, can doctor a horse, can draw a hen's neck, can even cook pig's meat—thanks to you and Duguid. Tell it not in Gath, I can even sup peasemeal brose.

AGNES (*merrily*). And what about building stacks?

OGILVIE (*laughing*). Ah, you have me there. I was a woeful failure.

AGNES. Duguid said he believed you were earnest enough to build the stack, but after he saw it finished he thought the leaning Tower of Pisa must be a tame affair.

OGILVIE. I'm afraid that stack had a hump; besides, it had paralysis on the west side.

AGNES. But Duguid says you are an expert with the hedgebill, and that you make a neat hedge.

OGILVIE. Then I am better at destruction than construction?

AGNES. Do you like farming, Mr. Ogilvie?

OGILVIE. I do indeed, if the experience of these few months is a fair test, but I'm afraid conditions have been too favourable to make it a normal test.

AGNES. Were not the conditions rather unfavourable? Mr. Gray was not there to be a guide and companion.

OGILVIE. But *you* were there, and in many ways you have proved a wonderful teacher. . . . Do you imagine it was nothing to me to watch you every day going about your duties, and keeping the house bright as a new pin? . . . And don't you think my food was far more delectable from the fact that *you* cooked it and spread it before me?

AGNES. We all liked to see you come daily to the farm; otherwise it would have been difficult to bear the master's absence.

[OGILVIE *walks over to the chair where AGNES is sitting, and bends over her.*]

OGILVIE. I remember the first time I saw you. . . . At the core of my being I felt that something vital had arrived, or rather that something which had always been there had

been newly manifested. . . . They say each individual is enveloped in an invisible aura, and when two persons are in harmony their two auras become intermingled, and the two persons are enveloped together in one congenial sphere. . . . Always when you are near that happens. . . . At this moment you and I and everything around us are swimming in a sea of sweetest emotion. . . . Harmony is here : something greater is here. (*AGNES starts from her seat and looks outward, wondering, attentive, innocent—OGILVIE takes her hand.*) We have reached a new country, we know not how. How wondrously fair and spacious and calm it is ! . . . I know now the everlasting sweetness of the light of loving spirits. . . . How fragrant thou art ! . . . The world of form has passed away. . . . Agnes ?

AGNES (*as if awakening*). Robert ?

[*He draws her to him and kisses her brow. This is followed by long silence.*]

AGNES (*agitated*). I forgot, I forgot. . . . I thought I could always hide myself from you. . . . I am only a servant, poor and of no account ; you are a man of substance, travelled and cultured. . . . I should have been stronger.

. . . It cannot be, Robert, it cannot be. I am nothing.

OGILVIE. You are everything. . . . When two folk love, Agnes, there is no reckoning.

AGNES. That is in a high sense true, but there is a pride in me which whispers that I bring nothing and you bring all. . . . I fear it, Robert. I need time to think.

[*Knocking heard at the door.* OGILVIE, *after kissing* AGNES, *opens the door to* DUGUID.]

OGILVIE. How are you? Come in-by.

DUGUID. That's a snell nicht, as cauld as charity. The sky's clear and the air's caller, but as like as no', it will be rain and fog the morn's morning. There's a brucht roond the mune. Ay, it's often deevilish cheengeable weather in November. . . . You're there, Nannie.

AGNES. I have been waiting, Duguid.

DUGUID. Oh, that's naething when you dinna need to wait in a draughty close or at a windy corner; you've been in guid company and at a warm hearth-stane.

OGILVIE. Any fresh news?

DUGUID. Ay. . . . It's a sair world.

OGILVIE. You are depressed, Duguid. Open your heart, man.

DUGUID. Weel, the fact is, it's next door to Martinmas term and six months' wages are due to the men and maids aboot the farm. I cam doon to arrange wi' the banker, an' he tells me that the maister's account is already owerdrawn.

OGILVIE. Has it been drawn upon much recently?

DUGUID. It's a' gaen helter-skelter since he gaed awa'. To hear that banker body you'd think he had got cheques drawn upon him frae every toon in Europe.

OGILVIE. And what did he propose?

DUGUID. He could dae nothing. . . . Oot o' respect for Mr. Gray he had already exceeded the limits. . . . I have a wheen pounds laid past mysel', but not near enough to pay the wages.

AGNES. You can have my savings too, Duguid; and *we* can do without wages, can't we, Duguid?

DUGUID. Of coorse, lassie. . . . In a week's time we'll hae the saddler's account; the lang blue invoice (thoom marked) frae the smiddy; the ironmonger's bill for oil, gunpoother, scythe

blades, and Guid kens what ! Then there's the rent. . . . Ay, we may as weel put on the shutters.

OGILVIE. Listen. . . . I have made it a point to live my own life, and therefore, beyond ordinary civilities of daily intercourse you don't know me. . . . I had an uncle, a bachelor, who did a great deal to teach me how to master existence, how not to desire, and how, if having desired, to be content with non-fulfilment. The best things are free, he said—air, light, and liking—and having taught me to be indifferent to mere riches, he died leaving me a large fortune. . . . That fortune belongs to the human race ; I am but its disburser. Only that which I earn can ever be really mine. . . . Now, Duguid and Agnes, trouble yourselves no more about wages and accounts. I shall see the banker to-morrow morning and put matters right, and then later in the day I intend to leave the village on a journey.

DUGUID. Man, you're a brick. . . . I'm no' sae auld as what I was an 'oor syne by a dizzen years—it's a fac's death ! The maister made one freend o' the richt kind when he met you,

Maister Ogilvie. . . . If it's a fair question, where are you gaun the morn?

OGILVIE. Glasgow.

AGNES. But you will come home—come back soon?

OGILVIE. It all depends. . . . Balsillie people have become so much a precious part in my life that I am impelled to do something to preserve the happy associations of the farm. We must get Mr. Gray back, and I mean to set forth on this mission at once. The farm must not change hands, nor must its master become a victim to the cold and insatiable world.

DUGUID. I wish ye muckle speed—you'll write me?

OGILVIE. Yes, Duguid; and I won't come back without him.

DUGUID. We'll miss you. . . . By guid luck the wark is weel on—a' the hedges are cut, and a' the fields are manured, barrin' a corner bit at the fit o' the loan. . . . (*Rising.*) I think we'll mak' for hame, lassie.

OGILVIE. It's a cold night, Duguid, and it is a stiff climb over the brae. Let me help you to a dram before you go (*fills a glass*), it will give the knock-out to your anxiety anyhow.

DUGUID. Your health, Nannie ; your health and guid luck, sir. (*Drinks.*) Man, man, it warms my heart like a bit plaidin'. . . . (*Turning to AGNES.*) I believe ye wad like to bide here.

AGNES. Oh, I'm quite ready.

DUGUID. Tae bide or tae come ?

AGNES (*blushing*). Don't tease me, Duguid, or I'll run home without you. (DUGUID *busies himself fixing his plaid around him.*) Good-night, Robert. Bring Mr. Gray with you and come back soon.

OGILVIE. Good-night, Agnes ; I'll remember.

DUGUID. Tak' nae denial ; bring him back, Maister Ogilvie. Noo, write me. Guid-nicht.

OGILVIE. Good-night, old man ; keep your mind easy about the rent. . . . (*Exeunt DUGUID and AGNES.*) She has spirit, and what is there finer in a woman ? The poor have one great advantage, in that their liking is spontaneous and not beset with considerations. . . . How she has wound herself into my life ! . . . Her pride is good—everything about her is good. . . . So she is to put on her thinking cap. I'll have patience and faith. . . . A way will open up to melt her pride and free her heart. . . . How things come round ! . . . (*Knocking is*

again heard at the door.) Hallo, another visitor !
Well, I say, welcome everybody !

[OGILVIE *opens the door, and the*
PROVOST *enters.*]

PROVOST. Good-evening, sir. I trust I have not taken too much liberty in dropping in without notice ?

OGILVIE. Come in, come in ; be seated, please. Come nearer the fire. Wait, I'll stir it up a bit—there now !

PROVOST. You are extremely comfortable here, Ogilvie, and there's an atmosphere about you which does me good. During these recent months an occasional visit here would have helped me greatly.

OGILVIE. Welcome at any time, Provost. My door is never locked, and, may I add, my bottle is seldom empty—or should it be, seldom full ? Let me help you to a glass.

PROVOST. Thanks ; that will just put me right. . . . Do you know, Ogilvie, I couldn't resist the temptation to come in to-night ! From the street my eye chanced to catch your lighted windows. I remembered you ; I remembered your friend Gray. . . . Pardon me uttering his name ; I am utterly unworthy to

speak of him. I did him a great wrong, but I am an unhappy old man, and my heart is curious to hear about Gray. . . . Any news of his whereabouts?

OGILVIE. He is now in Glasgow, where he has landed after ten weeks' aimless wandering on the Continent. . . . He did not write himself, but I have always managed to trace him.

PROVOST. In Glasgow! Then he has completed the circle of his misery—my daughter is there too.

OGILVIE. Perhaps some occult influence drew him there at last.

PROVOST. Our desires and our pride make life hard, Ogilvie, and my mind bears a burden nigh unbearable.

OGILVIE. Don't be cast down—give me your hand.

PROVOST. You do me good, young man; you are one in whom I can confide. They tell me the villagers confide in you.

OGILVIE. You said that you had done Gray wrong.

PROVOST. A great wrong, indeed, and to my daughter also. Listen! I gave her to Logan to hide my disgrace. . . . She accepted the

position, knowing everything. She was brave. . . . I worship my lassie, Ogilvie, and I despise myself every hour in the day.

OGILVIE. Why to Logan?

PROVOST. He alone knew my sin, and used the fact to coerce me into accepting his terms.

OGILVIE. And these were?

PROVOST. Money, and my daughter; to him it was all money, and money only. You see, Ogilvie, he had discovered that eighteen years ago I had stolen a patent—the patent on which my fortune has been built—from one of my workmen.

OGILVIE. Ah, that explains everything. . . . And the workman, is he still alive?

PROVOST. Alas, no; I have no opportunity of making reparation, and that makes my remorse the keener. . . . Dick Allan died soon after I took my false step, and he seems to have left no . . .

OGILVIE. Dick Allan—Dick Allan? Why, man, that's her father!

PROVOST. Her father? What do you mean? Have you heard of Dick Allan before? Did you know about me? Did you know what I had done?

OGILVIE. I have heard Dick Allan's story before, but it did not include the chapter you have told me.

PROVOST. Haven't I been a great scoundrel? Say, Ogilvie, am I not a great scoundrel?

OGILVIE. It is written, Provost, "Judge not, that you be not judged," and it is hard for me to censure or blame—ay, or even to praise or blame. I am slowly understanding the great idea of equality which dares any man to say at the ear of God that he is better or worse than his fellows.

PROVOST. And did Allan leave some one behind him to bear his name?

OGILVIE. And if there were such an one?

PROVOST. You do not mean . . . no, it cannot be. . . . I have inquired everywhere.

OGILVIE. Suppose I could introduce you to his only daughter—what then?

PROVOST. Why, my dear Ogilvie, what then! I would do a sum in arithmetic on my income for the year *before* I began to trade on Dick Allan's idea. I would calculate my income for the past eighteen years—on that and no more. Then, from my present estate I would deduct my total income on that basis for these eighteen

years, and I would also deduct the value of my estate as it was eighteen years ago. The balance, no mean one, would be handed over to Dick's daughter, and she would also in future receive her legitimate share in the business. Can you assist me, Ogilvie? I would gladly do this thing—I wish for peace of mind. Is there a way out?

OGILVIE. I can assist you, but only through assisting myself. This may seem strangely selfish on my part, but circumstances have thrust the *rôle* upon me, and in order that you may understand aright, I will make a slight personal explanation. . . . Ever since I happened on Leslie I have been a caller at Balsillie Farm, and more recently I have actually worked on it. During that period I have contracted a great admiration and strong affection for the maid-servant there. . . . I see you are surprised and somewhat amused, Provost, at the incident. . . . Well, to a man of the world doubtless I have acted like a fool, but my inner consciousness tells me that the prize was more than I deserved. She is a girl not out of her teens, and poor; I am a man in my thirties, and rich. Love refused to acknowledge these differences,

and we understood each other's heart. I can tell you, Provost, it has made life very sweet to me. One cloud came now and then to mar our perfect understanding, and it was caused by the conflict between her sense of poverty and her pride. Now, thank God, *you* can disperse that cloud, for the girl whose lap you would fain fill with gold for her father's sake, and the girl whose life I would fain fill with happiness for her own sake, are one and the same—Dick Allan's daughter.

PROVOST. Is it so?—is it so? My dear sir, you have almost made me happy.

OGILVIE. In this instance you deserve to be happy, for happiness lies in making others happy, and you have made me happy.

PROVOST (*looking at his watch*). It gets late; all the same, I must see her to-night. I could not sleep in this state of mind. Can't you come too, Ogilvie?

OGILVIE. Not under the circumstances. . . . I would advise you, however, to wait till I return from Glasgow with Gray, and then have a chat with Duguid before you say anything to her. He is her guardian, and he knows all about her; and, if you please, I would prefer not to be

mentioned at all in connection with the matter. Let her have the delight of telling me of her good luck by way of surprising me.

PROVOST (*rising*). When you come back I shall walk with a light step over the Laws—so light that she might mistake it for yours. Good-night, Ogilvie. [*Exit PROVOST.*]

OGILVIE (*solus*). That old man has dropped part of his heavy load of care, yet there is a bit of the burden which I'm afraid he will never cast off. . . . Agnes will be quite dumfounded to find herself an heiress and in business with the Provost! The situation has its humours too; I would like to hear Duguid on it. . . . Will I like her less for her luck? If so, then there has been a taint of patronage in my liking. But no, no, no—it is her, and her alone. . . . (*Knocking at the door is heard. Enter Provost's wife.*) How d'ye do, Mrs. Broom; this is a surprise visit!

MRS. BROOM. To no one more than myself, Mr. Ogilvie; but I sat brooding and knitting, and knitting and brooding, till I could sit no longer. Then I came out, and some one said she had seen him come here. Is he not here?

OGILVIE. The Provost? No; he has just gone. You have missed him by a minute or so.

MRS. BROOM. He will have gone home.

OGILVIE. I'm sure he is on his way home.

MRS. BROOM. I'm glad of that. . . . He has been perturbed and vexed all day long, so much, indeed, that I have scarcely let him out of my sight.

OGILVIE. Set your mind at rest; his anxiety is now almost away.

MRS. BROOM. Thank you, Mr. Ogilvie. . . . Now that I am here, may I ask you to call for us now and then. We should like that very much. Why not come to-morrow evening?

OGILVIE. I am strongly tempted to accept your invitation; but I have arranged to go off to Glasgow to-morrow.

MRS. BROOM. To Glasgow? There is more than coincidence in this. It is a dispensation. . . . Perhaps, when you have heard what I have to say, you will not object to do me a great service. As you are aware, Mr. and Mrs. Logan took up house in Glasgow, and until yesterday an address in Pollokshields found them. We think they have had a hard

struggle, and in the course of correspondence with his daughter the Provost over and over again tried to induce her to accept money presents, but she always, in the kindest manner, returned them. It hurt the Provost extremely, and many sleepless nights he passed. Then he tried to help them through Mr. Logan, who accepted the money at first, then, strangely, also sent it back. Reading between the lines, we could see that they were not too well off, and that added to the Provost's misery. He felt as if under a curse; and now, this morning, the last letter we sent them has been returned by the Post-office. They have removed without giving us their new address. . . . What I would like to ask, Mr. Ogilvie, is . . .

OGILVIE. I understand. . . . Rest assured I shall do my utmost to discover where they have gone.

MRS. BROOM (*meditatively*). You must despise me. . . .

OGILVIE. Despise you? Why? Why should I despise any one? Are we not all equals?

MRS. BROOM. When I first met you I had Edward Logan for a lover, to-day I am the

wife of Logan's wife's father. I who was his sweetheart am now his mother-in-law.

OGILVIE. It is certainly a peculiar departure.

MRS. BROOM. Well, now that I am here, I will let you understand. . . . I know you will be silent as the grave about it afterwards ; and as you know all the parties concerned, that will also give me relief. . . . When Edward Logan threw me over for money I was more than miserable, I was distracted and very ill ; but from my bed I rose with a plan of revenge. I who had been Nellie Broom's companion and a frequent visitor at her home before her marriage, made it a point to visit the Provost every day during his loneliness and grief, and thus by various little attentions made myself a necessity of his life. Then came my victory—we married. By this union I hoped to thwart Logan's designs and to beat him at his own game. I saw myself mistress of a great house, rolling in ready cash, keeping great style, and creating envy everywhere, especially in the breast of Logan. Ah ! it was all a dark descent into vanity ! . . . Somehow, after his daughter's departure the

Provost changed a great deal. He seemed to wear a heavy sorrow, but in doing so he developed a winning humility and tenderness; day by day he reduced life to the utmost simplicity, until we lived on no more than the wages of his meanest mechanic. . . . Then—would you believe it, Mr. Ogilvie?—something in me began to respond to his new nature; I grew to respect him, to admire him, and now, to-day, in spite of the disparity in our years, he is truly my husband. Therein lies my punishment—that I married him to use him as a tool for revenge, and in return he has been so good that now I love him.

OGILVIE (*gently raising her hand to kiss it*). In so far the Provost has been the gainer too. I am glad you have spoken. Be of good cheer; Father Time has a wonderful way with him.

MRS. BROOM. And this short interview has taught me, Mr. Ogilvie, that in listening lies much of the art of sympathy. . . . You have been kind. . . . I am going now.

OGILVIE. It grows late. I shall escort you home.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Room in a public-house, Glasgow—
A select coterie of Bohemians—Table covered
with glasses, bottles, etc.—Pipes and cigar-
ettes lit.*

FERNIE (*sings loudly and coarsely*). “Wha wadna be in love wi’ bonnie Maggie Lauder? a piper met . . .” (*General interruption and cries of protest. Fernie, feigning amazement, says*) I thought that remarkably sweet—but then you have no soul. Why, I could chant a draper’s advertisement that would bring tears to your eyes. . . .

RONALD. And the draper into bankruptcy. . . . Take a drink, man!

AITON. I say, Ronald, you mind the big, fat, frothy fellow who got “fou” with us last summer at Rothesay? He’s pegged out.

RONALD. What was his weak spot?

AITON. Heart. He ran for a suburban

train, managed to jump in, sat down, and floated upwards. It was deuced sudden.

RONALD. No swarm of aerolites to herald death's comet that time. . . . But he was too fat.

GARLAND. And why run for a train? Hurry is madness. In running to catch a train, one never knows what good fortune may be in the train that follows. Everybody rushes now; hence, life is swimming full of stuff that should be sediment.

LAWSON. Good! Socrates secundus, good! Health and wisdom! [Drinks.]

FERNIE (*tipsy*). All flesh is grass. We are like the crackling of thorns under a pot . . . sparks fly upwards. (*Sings.*) "I gaed a wae-fu' gate yestreen—a gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue."

[*Cries of protest, etc., under which he succumbs and falls a-drinking.*]

AITON. I say, Gray, you were late in coming down to-night. We're two rounds ahead of you.

CHRIS (*gloomily*). I have no designs on the early worm.

LAWSON (*to Chris*). Come, come, old man, give us a smile, for God's sake. You look as if you were stranded on the backwash of excess.

CHRIS. Let me have another glass and I will feel like laughter floating on the tide of sorrow. . . . Bah ! . . . Ho, Ronald ! Give us a song, man—a sweet song, something about the fields.

MARGARET.

“O'er dreamy wood and winding rill
The gloaming calm and grey ;
A lonely red light on the hill,
And no one by the way ;
We'll seek the spot where first we met
My budding blue-eyed Margaret.

The soothing stir of autumn leaves,
The singing of the linn,
Soft shadows of the standing sheaves,
And you my arms within ;
'Tis good that we should linger yet,
My budding blue-eyed Margaret.

Above the stars beam dewy clear,
Deep yellow is the moon ;
Sweet music comes from every sphere—
O leave me not so soon !
Why are those trembling eyelids wet,
My budding blue-eyed Margaret ?

To me the sheeny curl of gold
Upon your snowy brow,
The light that gives angelic mould
To every feature now,
Are more than charm or amulet,
My budding blue-eyed Margaret.”

Enter ROBERT OGILVIE, *disguised*.

OGILVIE. Pardon, gentlemen. I hope I don't intrude; but I was a lonely beggar at the bar, and hearing the song I came hither to warm myself at your geniality, trusting to your good nature.

LAWSON. Welcome, sir. What will you have?
[*Rings.*]

Enter MAID.

OGILVIE. Thank you; I will take a whisky—neat.

FERNIE (*waking up*). Bravo, bravo!—one of the right sort. A special for him, miss.

AITON. I say, Gray, how are you after the smoker on Thursday?

CHRIS. Fair enough, though it rather upset my morals. I began the week so well, too; but in the afternoon before the smoker I met Strachan, the minister's son, at Lauder's Bar. Things went too fast, and Strachan, who was due at a meeting in connection with the evangelist campaign, got dreadfully rocky; but before meeting-time we doctored him with coffees and bovrils and sodas, and he went away not so bad after all. Then I went to the

smoker, and from there, at eleven o'clock, to a hotel, where we spent a great night. . . . I'll stay indoors on Sunday, and have an awful dose of Ecclesiastes. I'm devilishly devout at bottom, and after a riotous week I become infernally pious on Sunday—I feel abominably good. But after the first drink on Monday, somehow Solomon's proverbs seem fatuous, inane, footle.

GARLAND. We're all pendulums, more or less.

FERNIE (*sings loudly*). "My grandfather's timekeeper was too large for the shelf, so it stood ninety . . ."

LAWSON. Enough! Enough! Your grandfather's timekeeper stood far less than we do now. Why, Fernie, can't you keep quiet?

CHRIS. As well expect frozen mutton to rear lambs.

OGILVIE. 'Tis a pastoral metaphor, but very apt, sir; may I ask if ever you wished to live in the country?

CHRIS. Wished to live in the country? Why, I stayed in it to my eternal wounding.

OGILVIE. Ah, I'm sorry if my thoughtless question has opened a clasped book.

CHRIS. Believe me, no excuse is necessary. I love the receiving earth and the impulsive strains of common birds, and I dream on the slimy streets of the humming of bees among clover. The sun, like one I know, is not inconstant, but cloud and clear sky falsely read its face; faithful behind all seeming, the sun loves the earth. The tears I cannot shed cling as raindrops to the leafless wood—and oh, what wondrous wind will bring to me a blither mood?

LAWSON. If you indulge these sentiments, Gray, you shall become “greetin’ fou.”

FERNIE (*still tipsy*). I will now recite eight lines by a poet not yet dead, but who might have been :—

“Tak’ wha likes a reamin’ stoup,
Ale is no’ the drink for me ;
Gie the glass a yellow doup,
Gowden wi’ guid barley bree.
Time high-gear’d speeds bienly on
Notions to ilk noddle loup.
Ere the soomin’ glee begone,
Gie the glass a yellow doup.”

AITON. Fernie, you’re an awful bounder !

FERNIE. Bounder ! I’m a hero ; I live in the same house as my mother-in-law.

OGILVIE. Some day they will appreciate you, old man ; but Scotsmen are slow to show hero-worship. They are cautious and refuse risks. To avoid regrets they praise their hero when they are sure of him—that is, when he is dead.

RONALD. Heroes get worse than praise ; they are made the subjects of melodrama.

OGILVIE. True, sir ; and an instance comes to my memory this minute. It was a droll night.

LAWSON. Let us have it, stranger, before we put another tow in the rock.

OGILVIE. It was an amateur company representing the life of Sir William Wallace. First Citizen : “Behold he comes ; it is the stripling Wallace.” Enter Wallace wearing an iron-grey beard, and doddering like a man of seventy-seven. Wallace speaks : “Here comes sweet Marion.” Wallace walks up to Marion, saying : “Let me twine this little primrose in thy fair hair.” He lifts up an ivy wreath without any flower in it and places it on Marion’s head. Her hair unfortunately was black. Again Wallace speaks : “I swear by the light of yon silver moon.” The limelight

operator, either excited or intoxicated, turns on a lurid ruby colour, and there is laughter among the gods. The printed programme asked the audience to wait a few minutes at the end of the play, when a magnificent battle scene would be staged. Five minutes passed, no battlefield. Ten minutes passed, no battlefield. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, just when the patience of the audience had been exhausted, all over the house there was heard a gruff voice from behind the curtain addressing the leader of the orchestra in these terms: "Play them oot; play them oot." Solemnly the band arose and blared forth "God save the Queen." *Excunt omnes.*

AITON. That beats cock-fighting or a week at the Isle of Man.

LAWSON. I once saw realism spoiled by a man in the flies losing control of his snow-shower. It fell in a solid lump on the head of the pitiful heroine. The look she gave him laid him up for three weeks with chilblains and frost-bite.

AITON. The woman I marry must be a heroine.

GARLAND. She will be.

FERNIE. A hard knock ; yet I rather fancy Aiton as a model husband. I say, Garland, you haven't seen my wife yet with her last baby?

GARLAND. I don't suppose I ever shall.

LAWSON. It pleases Garland to be ironical, but some day he will carry the white man's burden too, and lift it up for baptism.

GARLAND. I enjoy baptisms — especially when the preacher prays the male child to be blest, because the child will find it difficult, as we all do in this melancholy vale, to keep his garments clean.

AITON. I don't wish you anything so bad as a private fog hanging round your house ; but, Garland, I'm glad to say your nose is becoming red.

GARLAND. That proves nothing, for you drink more than I, and your own nasal promontory is the colour of a policeman's coat when there is a disturbance on hand—invisible blue.

FERNIE. I don't relish these hard pleasantries.

GARLAND. He who tries to please everybody may as well try to walk dry between raindrops.

AITON. But you usually show a social quality.

LAWSON. Yes, he does, but for the moment it is hidden.

AITON. As you say—a real quality, but hidden.

LAWSON. Not unlike the halfpenny added to the price per bag chalked on the coalman's board—though not always seen, it is always there, as any housewife will tell you.

GARLAND. While appearances are deceptive, what we fail to see deceives us also.

OGILVIE. That is true, sir. For instance, should you discover a large family on holiday grouped around their bachelor uncle or around their grandfather, wouldn't it be quite natural to assume that the young people were treating him with affection and reverence? Yet they have taken him with them for a holiday so that he may pay for them all.

GARLAND. Yet it doesn't do to be poor and elderly either.

OGILVIE. No; the poor man, no matter his age or quality, is always in the road, and yet by some strange paradox the poor are ever useful.

GARLAND. Still, they can see the rich occasionally, and that is a great refreshment.

LAWSON. They can even admire the daughters of the wealthy, though they may not possess them.

GARLAND. Thank Heaven, I possess nothing, and never intend to own anything.

OGILVIE. Then, in a great and high sense you possess everything.

GARLAND. Yes.

OGILVIE. Yet, my dear sir, if a vulgar interpretation were put upon your philosophy, I would not advise you to put your principles into operation under the existing Police Acts. You would be confined during his Majesty's pleasure. . . . But I should like to hear our friend sing again.

RONALD (*sings* "O merry have the moments been").

"O merry have the moments been,
O merry they shall be,
For sorrow may not intervene
Or foes come o'er the sea.

We toil and trouble ev'ry day
Till life is dark and vain ;
For one brief hour be wisely gay,
Our glasses fill again.

'Tis not alone the spirits' charm
That brightens ev'ry eye ;
For light is born when hearts are warm
And fancy wings on high.

O welcome night when cronies meet
And love with liquor flows,
When kindness fills the honoured seat
And round the wassail goes.

Good drink is only for the good,
Bright brains alone drink deep ;
The evil man attains his mood,
The dullard goes to sleep !

Here's to the days that are to be,
Here's to the days behind,
And here's to love and liberty,
And here's to all mankind."

FERNIE. I have an idea !

GARLAND. Then seek refuge. A man nowadays is never in so great danger of his life as when an idea strikes him. On the other hand, he has little chance of allowing his conscience to strike him. In fact, one need not have a conscience in Glasgow, but I admit that a waterproof is an essential.

AITON. The idea, Fernie—what is it ?

FERNIE. It's away again. That philosopher spoilt it, and I'd rather be alone in a cellar

cool than with a philosopher on the sands o' Dee. Let's have another drink. (*Rings.*) Why, that's the idea come back again. (*Enter MAID.*) Same as before, miss.

LAWSON. Don't drink any more, Fernie.

FERNIE (*with hiccough*). I'm not tipsy—am I tipsy? If I had a spirit-level I could hold it flat. You test me. I'm not tipsy.

LAWSON (*taking a frame from a nail in the wall*). Here you are, then. Let us see.

[*All stand round while FERNIE endeavours to hold it level, and each in turn declares that the mercury is not in the centre.*]

FERNIE (*still hiccoughing*). Your sight, gentlemen, is flagrantly defective. I'm holding the bally thing straight.

LAWSON (*taking the frame from him*). Fernie, you're away with it! That's not a spirit-level—it's a thermometer!

FERNIE (*pretty bad*). I don't say you're telling an untruth, Lawson, but you are equal to prophesying about the weather.

AITON. Sit down, Fernie. As the old woman said when the artist finished her portrait, "You're a humbling sight."

FERNIE (*sinking cautiously into his seat*). Sirs,

you shan't bow-wow me ; you won't insult a man who is as sober as a cat at daytime.

OGILVIE. You'd better do as the teetotaller did when a man threatened to shoot him if he didn't drink a glass of Scotch.

FERNIE. What did he do ?

OGILVIE. He swallowed the insult.

FERNIE (*heavily*). Well, I don't mind—a little soda with it, please—my tongue is growing thick.

OGILVIE (*to CHRIS*). You spoke, sir, of having stayed in the country. Now it so happens that I know a splendid rural bit, and I have rooms there. Would you care to visit me ?

CHRIS. I appreciate your kindness, sir, but I'm not respectable these days.

OGILVIE. What is that to me ? I accept you as a man, is that not sufficient ? Come as my guest, and I'll promise you a good holiday. We could go fishing, of course, and on the way we could call at a farmhouse where an old friend of mine hangs out.

CHRIS. What is the name of this place ?

OGILVIE. Leslie ; and the farmhouse of Bailsillie sits over the brae in a little clump of trees beside a streamlet. A charming spot it is.

CHRIS (*with tears in his voice*). And the old man's name?

OGILVIE. Duguid, a grand chap, who would make you at home in a minute.

Enter MAID.

MAID. Eleven o'clock, gentlemen!

[*More or less befuddled, the rest of the party move out with a husky "good-night," and singing, "Will ye no' come back again?"*]

OGILVIE (*continuing*). The farmer himself has been away for some time. Duguid is only in charge when the farmer is away, but everything is well looked after. There is also a ward of the old man's—a delicious girl—who keeps the house and all about it like a new pin. To see these two together would do one's heart good. (*The MAID puts out the lights one by one.*) Here is my card. Call for me to-morrow at twelve, and we'll fix up that visit.

CHRIS (*trying to decipher card*). There is not enough light. . . . I'll come to-morrow. . . . No, there's not enough light.

MAID (*with emphasis*). Gentlemen!

[*Both rise.*]

CHRIS (*as they walk toward the door*). Do they complain that their master leaves them to

do all the work? When he comes back will they . . . ?

MAID (*with hand on the last light*). Good-night, gentlemen.

BOTH. Good-night, miss. [*Last light out.*]

SCENE II. — OGILVIE'S *apartments*—CHRISTOPHER *and* OGILVIE *sitting by the fire.*

CHRIS. But not a single review is favourable. I'm sorry your book has not caught on after you have spent all these years on it.

OGILVIE. Tuts, old man, there is nothing to fret over. I am the better for having written it. I did my best. The reviewers, with far less time at their disposal, did their best, and they find me wanting. They have their opinion: I have my book. That's all.

CHRIS. Yes; but there are lucky dogs who always seem to please the critics. Why not you?

OGILVIE. Thanks, old man; your advice is so good that I cannot accept it. Besides, advice, as you know, is for giving, not for taking. However, here's a bargain—when you are prepared to die to please the undertaker, I will write to please the critics.

CHRIS. Then creative work is its own reward?

OGILVIE. Precisely, in that it is like virtue ; and, as you know, Providence is on the side of virtue if one lives long enough, but not unusually one dies in the interval.

CHRIS. Come, come, don't be cynical.

OGILVIE. Get thee behind me, flatterer !

CHRIS. Flatterer?

OGILVIE. Yes ; what is a cynic? Why, cynicism is a too-nearness to truth on the part of a good man. It is a want of perspective, a lack of atmosphere ; but still it exhibits courage to face bald facts.

CHRIS. And, in all conscience, facts are sometimes ugly enough that one may be excused for using coloured glasses.

OGILVIE. Of course ; just in the same way, if life becomes too piquant, one can restore the balance by reading religious verse. But then, life is so desirable from every point. When, through experience, one learns to accept all phenomena, a new faculty is cultivated. You know the rhyme :—

“ Life with a rush, life in a swoon,
Life's a dance to every tune ;
So envy not the silver spoon,

For it may sup but sorrow :
I kissed a maid 'gainst what she said ;
I'll kiss her mate to-morrow."

CHRIS. I like to see you meet rebuffs so gamely, but I'd been better pleased to hear your praises sung, and to see your publisher beaming.

OGILVIE. Tut, tut ; it is not a question of courage at all, but one of wisdom.

CHRIS. Wisdom ?

OGILVIE. Nothing else ; wisdom is the true adjustment of knowledge and feeling. But let us leave such questions and come to one more urgent. Pardon me, Christopher mine, but—but—when are you going to take up the old ways at the old place among the old friends ?

CHRIS. Don't, don't, for mercy's sake ! . . .

OGILVIE. It touches the raw, I know ; yet, for the sake of those who have been faithful in your absence, face the question, Chris.

CHRIS. Face it ! Why, you seem to read men's hearts. The question possesses me. It appeared like the least definite hint of dawn—that was ten days ago. Betimes and with sun's warmth the unsought suggestion came again.

At intervals the disappearing wings of it claimed a second's attention.

OGILVIE. Ay, is that so? The soul is exquisitely patient with the body.

CHRIS. Patient indeed; for slowly through the opening window of mental detachment the subconscious suggestion emerged complete—to go home! Ah, but had I not decided to do so from the first? At that moment I was convinced that I had already decided. Next day, however, with its layers of impression, hid the idea away entirely.

OGILVIE. The fate, alas! of many true impulses in a country whose atmosphere is hiring and bargaining. What is the rest, Chris?

CHRIS. One evening, happily, when the sun's disc slipped ruddily over the western horizon, the idea of going home passed into the region of desire. Incautiously, I found myself in imagination there—the uplands, the north wind, friendly, unsocial wayfarers, and the everlasting streams and hills. I would drink at the well on the brae; even water at the hands of memory is refreshing. Then, without warning, some dissipation broke the brittle globe of fancy and home—going was again obscured.

But now that you have asked me, Robert, I will go home. Heaven knows I'm hungry for home—hungry for the dear bonnie place that it is. Ay, ay, let us go home.

SCENE III.—*Room of a two-roomed house in East End of Glasgow*—LOGAN stretched asleep on a bed—GRAY sitting motionless and absorbed on a stool beside the bed—MRS. LOGAN and OGILVIE standing together a few yards away.

MRS. LOGAN. He still sleeps.

OGILVIE. I hope he will have a refreshing sleep.

MRS. LOGAN. He doesn't complain any, and I'm sure he suffers a great deal. Do you think he will be long ill, Mr. Ogilvie?

OGILVIE. Oh no; he will get rid of the pain very soon.

MRS. LOGAN. I'm so glad of that.

OGILVIE. I think you should rest awhile, Mrs. Logan—you have been sitting up long enough. Gray and I will wait. We will rap through if you are needed. Please go.

MRS. LOGAN. One minute. I know he is

safe in your hands, only tell me, now that you have an opportunity, exactly how he met his accident.

OGILVIE. Gray had made up his mind to return to Balsillie, and we were on our way to catch the train for the North, when Gray became more and more preoccupied as we neared the station. You have seen people fall into a brown study, and, as if keeping step with their thoughts, walk several steps in front of their friends? Well, he was doing the same, and just as he turned the corner at George Square I heard a loud tumult, which was followed by the sight of a runaway horse tearing wildly past the Square down Queen Street. When I reached the corner I found Gray bending over the prostrate body of your husband. A bystander told me later that when the horse and lorry came thundering out of the station and down the decline, Gray walked quite unknowingly right before them; then a man, your husband, rushed forward and swung Gray out of danger, but too late for himself to escape, being struck by a tram of the lorry. It was proposed to take him to the Infirmary, but he begged hard to be taken to you; so we brought him.

MRS. LOGAN (*wiping her eyes*). "We looked for peace, but no good came, and for a time of health, and behold trouble! When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me." . . . You were a while with the doctor, Mr. Ogilvie—what did he say?

OGILVIE (*smiling benignly*). He said: "See that Mrs. Logan gets rest; she is not too strong." . . . I think you should lie down.

MRS. LOGAN. Very well.

[*After a look at LOGAN asleep, and a hasty glance at the mute, motionless figure of GRAY, she retires.*]

OGILVIE (*to himself*). True, he will soon lose all his pain—the doctor doesn't give him many hours on this earth. . . . Poor woman, she has been made to drink the water of gall. (*LOGAN makes a slight movement, and GRAY rises and walking to the bed he gently raises LOGAN'S head on one arm and gives him to drink; when he replaces the tumbler, OGILVIE whispers to him.*) He is very ill, Chris—the doctor gives no hope. I fear he is dying.

CHRIS. Mine is the better luck this turn, for I am dead already.

[*Walks back to his seat at the bedside.*]

LOGAN. Where is she?

OGILVIE. She is resting.

LOGAN. We shan't disturb her; she will be tired, poor thing! She has been the one bright light in my life; otherwise, it has been a sad farce. She actually reawakened my faith in humanity—the faith that was mine when a boy—awakened it in me who but lately laughed at goodness. I see now that goodness of all things can stand great tear and wear.

OGILVIE. Pray do not speak, lest it weary you.

LOGAN. Thanks, but it does not weary, and anyhow I shall soon take a long, long, silent rest. . . . When I came to the city I opened an office and waited weeks for clients, but none came. There's a little laughter in the situation at first, but time kills laughter. The one and only office-boy filled up his hours with reading penny horribles and ha'penny comics. On special occasions he performed gymnastics on an iron cross-bar over a partition doorway. Civil boy, though. . . .
(GRAY rises and carefully adjusts LOGAN's head on the pillow, which had become slightly uncomfortable.) Good. . . . Good. . . . The

Provost sent us money, but she wouldn't touch it. I did. I mocked her and she never demurred, yet she kept her ground. At last she was pinched, for she had spent the little money of her own, and then I fancied my chance had come to finally persuade her to accept the old man's cash. No use. She got a few pupils for German and held on. The old story. . . . Ends refused to meet, and we quitted our house for this shanty, pawning much by the way.

OGILVIE. And how have you been doing here, old chap?

LOGAN. God only knows how we have managed to exist; yet for me it has been the happiest period of my life. You see, I got to love and respect her so much that latterly I thought as she thought, said as she said, believed as she believed. . . . She is the fairest rose-garden among women.

OGILVIE. When you are better we'll all go back to the old village together—what say you?

LOGAN (*brokenly*). I would like to see it—but never again!

OGILVIE. Don't think that. Some fine

summer day we'll fish the Leven together, and there's sure to be a few good trout in the pool at the Auld Wa's. Don't you hear the reel spinning? You've landed him, but you've frightened the bird away—oh no, he's back again. There he stands, a water fealty, on a big blue-grey boulder in the middle of the stream—his claws spread firmly—balanced slickly on his black, thin, taut legs—bobbing his tail—black-and-grey body stationary—and head perkly alert. He's a neat bird.

LOGAN (*absently*). A neat bird. . . . I thought I scented honeysuckle just now. . . . (*Shuddering.*) Bah! how cold it is!

OGILVIE (*walks to the window, holds back the blind, showing a sheeny night and snow falling*). Yes, it is always coldest just as the thaw begins. I knew when the wind blew from the north-east this morning, driving the clouds before it, that there would be snow.

[GRAY rises, lifts an overcoat from a peg and spreads it over LOGAN's feet.]

LOGAN (*speaking with anguish*). To you, Gray, I have been black and vile—you who had been a friend to me all along. . . . Forgive. . . . (GRAY nods forgiveness impassively.)

. . . Yet you can treasure this fact, that while she has been from first to last a good wife to me her heart has always been in your keeping. . . . You are the richest man I know because of that. I have been a dog in a deer's den.

OGILVIE. Not so hard on yourself, old man! —to give one instance, you played the hero in saving Chris.

LOGAN (*wearily*). It was the only brave thing I ever did, and I don't know why I did it; he might have been anybody. It was done before I recognised him (*icily*); it wasn't even expiation, or for the sake o' langsyne. (*After a brief silence.*) My feet are very cold. . . . (*With a touch of the old Adam, as if he had been looking backward.*) Mary Gillespie fairly had the size of me, and it was a neat revenge to become my mother-in-law. Had she always shown the same resource and spirit I might have been at Leslie still. . . . And that chap Duguid had a keen scent. "Ay, my man," said he; "if you pull a rope for the deevil, there's a noose at the end o't for yoursel'." . . . If I had to live my life again!

OGILVIE (*gently*). If you had to live it o'er again?

LOGAN (*reflectively*). There would be no change . . . couldn't be.

OGILVIE (*slowly and softly*). Precisely; our experience here is only valuable for another life.

LOGAN (*with a hectic brightness*). Do you know what comes back to me? I see Elder John Blair, with his long grey beard and bushy eyebrows; before him sits a row of restless boys; John is gravely quoting from one of the prophets: "Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

OGILVIE. Pray rest awhile; you tax your strength overmuch. . . . Rest.

LOGAN (*feverishly*). Only one thing more. . . . When it is all over with me, Ogilvie, will you look after her and do everything for her?—it will be easier for you to do it. Gray would be willing, but I have already cost his feelings too much. . . . (*In a clear whisper, and looking intently at OGILVIE.*) You understand?

[LOGAN closes his eyes and seems near his end. OGILVIE walks over to the room door and gives one tiny knock. Soon the door opens and MRS. LOGAN, pale and dishevelled, comes quickly and noiselessly forth; coming to the bedside, she is recognised by LOGAN, who feebly holds out his hand to her—then, as if without design, his other hand slips down into that of GRAY, who is sitting at the opposite side of the bed from her, who thereupon reverently rises to his feet without a word.]

[Curtain falls on the scene in deep silence.]

SCENE IV. — *Balsillie Farm - Town in the evening and in the spring-time of the year.*

DUGUID (*busy cleaning harness, sings the while*).

“Scotia’s queen to sunny France
Has gane wi’ a’ her Maries,
Guid luck shall guide her every glance
And guard her gate wi’ fairies.
Scotia’s queen in kirk and dance,
The fairest o’ the fair is;
For her, brave gallants couch their lance
And reckon not what care is.

When she comes sailin' ower the sea
The young wife o' a king, O !
I'll lay my lugs in barley bree
And dance the Hieland fling, O !
Wi' her comes ane gey dear to me,
Who coort and cot could ding, O !
She is the apple o' my e'e,
My heart's ain sunny Spring, O !"

Enter OGILVIE.

OGILVIE (*imitating* DUGUID). "Spring, O !"

. . . You said she would be mine in the spring.

DUGUID (*smiling*). It's no' spring yet, man.

OGILVIE (*mock heroically*). Behold, the bees are dipping in the crocus, and an ode may now be indited to the daisy. Spring is here !

DUGUID. Havers, man ! . . . A wheen silly bees, a blink o' sun, and a gowan dinna mak' a spring.

OGILVIE (*exultantly*). But that's not all. I heard a lark sing yesterday, and this morning a blackbird was in great form near my window, and besides, two sheeny starlings were pecking in the grass where the sun shone.

DUGUID (*airily*). That might a' be, but there's still snaw to be seen.

OGILVIE (*as if offended*). . Of course, if you refer to the dirty lumps of snow in the ditches

and hedge bottoms away up at the hill, and call these winter, I've no more to say.

DUGUID (*archly*). Couldn't ye wait till summer? It would save ye a spring cleanin'.

OGILVIE (*valiantly*). I can face that, and there is no other danger. It is not as if she hadn't learned to cook.

DUGUID (*smiling, hangs up the harness, washes his hands, and proceeds to say with fine comedy while drying them*). Ay, ay, you can at least be happy thrice a day if you mairry a guid cook. Friendly advice has cost mony a man his friend, yet it behoves me, your senior, to counsel ye on the solemn step ye meditate. Young man, treat your wife as if you were a candidate for election and she a voter. Bear and forbear—there are mony things in this world besides soap to which we maun shut oor een. In ony case, dinna sneer because you have mairried the wrang woman—she may have mairried the wrang man. Mairry her frae her ain hoose—the greatest kirk lottery is a kirk waddin'. If mairriage turns oot a failure (which the Lord forbid!) insure yoursel' very high, then work yoursel' to death in payin' the premiums. Don't worry: contentment with a guid income

is great gain. Gie your wife the best share o' your company, and dinna be like certain stars—oot late at nicht and looking pale in the mornin'. Beware of domestic medicine, for brandy is sometimes very guid. In Scotland it's hard to be a guid husband, for the satisfaction o' beatin' one's wife seldom costs mair than seven-and-six—it's far and awa' the cheapest pastime invented. Aye mind this—the twa periods when women are least understood are afore and after mairriage. I hope you shall grow great thegither, for there's naething sae obscure as the husband o' a successfu' woman. Aye be heartsome—folk wi' big feelings and big feet dinna stand on trifles. It's said that mairriages are made in heaven, and personally I dinna intend to mairry till I get there. (*With sudden strong emotion.*) Man, man, if I hadna perfect trust in ye, I wadna blether as I've been daein' the noo, for I'm passin' ower to your care a bit lass that has made life sweet—sweet to me. . . . (DUGUID *and* OGILVIE *grasp hands.*) . . . Ah, here she comes! (*Agnes comes from the house, radiant, wondering a little at their attitude. DUGUID withdraws his right hand and gives it to AGNES, taking OGILVIE'S right hand in his*

left, then he joins their hands.) I canna fix a time—ye maun mak' it up atween ye. . . .
(*Poising his head as if listening.*) I thocht I heard the rummle o' a machine—there's somebody driving across the Laws. [*Exit DUGUID.*]

[OGILVIE and AGNES sit down on a rustic seat which encircles a tree in the courtyard.]

OGILVIE. Come, my little one, let me tell you a story. . . . Once upon a time there was a very greedy man who must needs get the best of everything, and yet he did nothing to deserve it. When it came to pass that he met a princess famous for her riches and goodness and beauty, he said to himself, "This is the most precious gem in the world, so it must be mine." He went to the plumed birch woods, over the hills and far away, to consult a hermit who was renowned for wisdom. The wise hermit said to him, "Have you seen all the women of the world?" "No," said the greedy man. "And how do you conclude that there aren't others as excellent as your princess?" "I just believe it," said the greedy one, "and I wish only her." "Think," said the hermit; "if you desire a watch or a dog or a horse, and having got it

you come across a better, you can sell or discard the first. Not so when it is the question of a wife—she is thine till death comes.” “I will have none but her,” cried the greedy one; “and if you care to test my judgment, let it be done.” The wise hermit smiled, and going into his cell, he opened a heavy oaken desk covered with antique brass-work. Returning to the greedy man, he said: “There is a ring, called the Ring of Light, which came from the East; it is peculiarly shapen inside the circle, and because of that, until this day, no woman can wear it. The woman who can wear it fittingly on the second finger of her left hand is the most precious jewel in the world.” The greedy man went off at once, and coming to the princess, he took her hand in this manner and put the ring on her finger. (OGILVIE *takes AGNES’S hand and puts on the ring.*) “Does it fit?” he cried. Then the princess answered:—

AGNES (*gazing at the ring and speaking artlessly*). It suits splendidly.

OGILVIE. Then the greedy man is content.

Enter PROVOST.

PROVOST. I have come direct to her, Ogilvie, now that you have returned, and it

seems an age since you went away. (*Turning to AGNES.*) Ah, let me look at you, my child! So at last I've found the way out! But you do not understand why I should hasten here and speak to you in this manner. I will tell you. . . . I will tell you briefly. . . . It is this. . . . I hold in trust for you a large sum of money which belonged to a . . . a friend of mine long since dead. . . . He was your father.

AGNES. I do not remember my father.

PROVOST. And I, until recently, did not know his daughter.

AGNES. The circumstances are too strange for me to realise them.

PROVOST. But it is all plain to me, and Duguid will explain it all later. . . . Well, my child, we must at once arrange about getting your affairs settled, and the money properly set aside in your name.

AGNES (*simply*). I do not wish money.

PROVOST (*alarmed and despairing*). What? You must take it—you must take it! . . . It will kill me if you don't take it!

AGNES. It has nothing to do with me, somehow. . . . I can't explain. . . . I'm so happy as I am.

PROVOST (*appealingly*). Come, Ogilvie, help me to prevail upon her; you know what her refusal means to me.

OGILVIE (*calmly and gently*). The Provost, Agnes, feels it his duty to hand you this fortune. I shall not bias you to accept it or reject it, but I would remind you that by its acceptance you would be enabled to meet me on equal material terms—pardon me for saying it in the presence of another, dearest—and it would also satisfy what you once referred to . . . your sense of pride.

AGNES. That world is all away, Robert; under the sun of joy the snow of pride has altogether disappeared.

OGILVIE (*grasping her hand passionately*). Blessing, blessing on you, my little one. . . . It is complete!

PROVOST (*mournfully*). What shall I do? . . . Is there no way out? . . . You know what it means to me, Ogilvie. . . . What shall I do? Oh, my God!

Enter DUGUID, who looks surprised and inquiringly.

AGNES. If it is mine, as you say, Provost,

then give it to Duguid, who cared for and brought me up, and who has need of it.

PROVOST. It is yours, and yours to dispose of. (*Turning to DUGUID.*) I have learned, Duguid, that this is Dick Allan's daughter,, and you will be gladly surprised to learn that her father left a large fortune. Well, I have offered it to her, but she says she doesn't need it, and she suggests that you should have it.

DUGUID. I really think she would be better withoot it, and as for me it would be a nuisance at my time o' life. Mair than that, I canna understand hoo Dick left a' that money (*DUGUID looks hard at the PROVOST*), for he died like a church-mouse. But, of course, it's no' my concern. I would suggest, hooever, that you hand the money to Mr. Ogilvie. He has sae much already that it wadna dae him ony harm.

PROVOST. I thank you. It is an excellent idea, Duguid, and, according to all signs and appearances, it will reach Dick's daughter as soon that way, and as sure, as any other.

OGILVIE. I accept your offer, Provost, and may it bring rest ; but I also make a proposal.

The village, as you are aware, is somewhat stagnant for lack of easy communication with other districts. It sits on the top of a ridge, and every entrance to it is by a steep road. Now, if there were a stone bridge built across the valley to the south, it would connect the village with the main highway and the railway line. There would be twenty spans, at least, in the bridge, and it would take five or six years to build. Well, hand me the money. But I want more—I want you also to buy out my interest in your business—you understand me. After the bridge is built, what money is left will be set aside to keep the bridge in good repair. The bridge shall be called Dick Allan's Bridge. As Provost, you shall announce to the first meeting of the Town Council that an anonymous donor has undertaken to build this bridge.

PROVOST. God bless you, Ogilvie, and you, my child, and you, Duguid (*evidently overcome*). I am going now.

OGILVIE. Permit Agnes and me to walk with you a bit. [*Exeunt.*]

DUGUID (*solus*). The brig is a maist excellent symbol. A brig brings us nearer to new

influences and awa' frae settled grooves; it brings ithers to us, wha cheenge oor ways o' life; it at aince joins and dissolves. A brig is aye the solution o' a diffeeculty, a way oot or a way in: ae side is founded in the past and the ither in the future. Ower this ane the Provost will cross frae the region o' remorse, ower the river o' bitterness, into the land o' peace.

Enter CHRIS.

CHRIS. If it keeps fair, Duguid, we should be able to get that field east of the loaning harrowed to-morrow. . . . By-the-bye, I saw the Provost and Ogilvie and Agnes on the road to the village. What's the Provost after, think you?

DUGUID. It appears somebody has offered to build a brig ower the Leven Valley. The Provost is discussin' it wi' Mr. Ogilvie.

CHRIS. And he couldn't discuss it with a better man.

DUGUID. That's sae; and he's a man ye dinna see a' at aince, for he doesna put everything in the shop window. Mr. Ogilvie has aye been a staunch freend.

CHRIS. I know him to be a good fellow, and his constancy to me while I was in the fire I cannot worthily forget. It surprised me.

DUGUID. Surprise is for the man wha kens maist. . . . Mr. Ogilvie's been the stang o' the trump. When I used to say it was a big cheenge for him to be stavin' and slavin' about at farm-work, he smiled and answered gaily, that "want of change starved the mind."

CHRIS. I had given him up as a confirmed bachelor, and now he is about to make a vital change, but one never knows. Weren't you a bit in the dark as to what was likely to happen?

DUGUID. 'Deed no'; I hadna to look cups or read spealbanes to see what it would come to. They baith had it badly.

CHRIS. Agnes will make him a splendid wife, Duguid.

DUGUID. There's nae doot about it—we may smit thoombs on that.

CHRIS (*clearing his throat and speaking with difficulty*). At the back-end and during winter, Duguid, you had a lot to do. . . . You stood the test well.

DUGUID. Hoot, man! it was but a hail-shoer in May.

CHRIS (*seriously*). And that's keen and cold enough while it lasts, Duguid.

DUGUID. Oh ay, but ye'll have noticed that the cattle juist turn tail to the on-ding and go on browsing ; so I tholed my fate and worked awa'.

CHRIS. Often, often I thought of you, and when far away I realised to the full how well and faithfully you have always served me. You were the same to my father.

DUGUID. Ay. . . . I've served ye baith.

CHRIS. My father left a provision in his will, Duguid, whereby, in case of old age or feeble health, you will be amply provided for. Besides implementing my father's promise, I wish on my own behalf to . . .

DUGUID (*interrupting*). Wheesht, wheesht ! We'll let that flea stick to the wa', laddie. I'm as soond as a bell. I'm spoon hale, and I'm no' exactly auld — at least, I dinna feel auld. And I'm aye sure o' a bite and a bed.

CHRIS. But the future must be considered.

DUGUID. Man, I'm fine, and I'll never be as hard set as Bennet's cattle.

CHRIS. What's the allusion?

DUGUID. Bennet left some cattle on the

hill to grow or dow. "It's true," he said, "they have little to eat awa' up on the hill there ; but damn, look at the view they have !"

CHRIS (*laughing in spite of himself*). Well, well, Duguid, we'll talk of these matters some other day ; meanwhile, I'm glad to see you in good fettle and happy.

DUGUID (*with a touch of pathos*). My happiness lies in seein' you happy—in seein' you uphaud the honour o' the auld name—and noo, when a' things are gaun richt and I tak' a bit walk after the day's wark's ower, the sweet influence o' a deep content comes doon aboot me, enhancing the wistfulness o' the gloamin'. I look at the big Lomonds, at the Lothrie burn, and at the Leslie woods, till everything becomes kin and real and gracious, peacefu' and bonnie as a bairn asleep.

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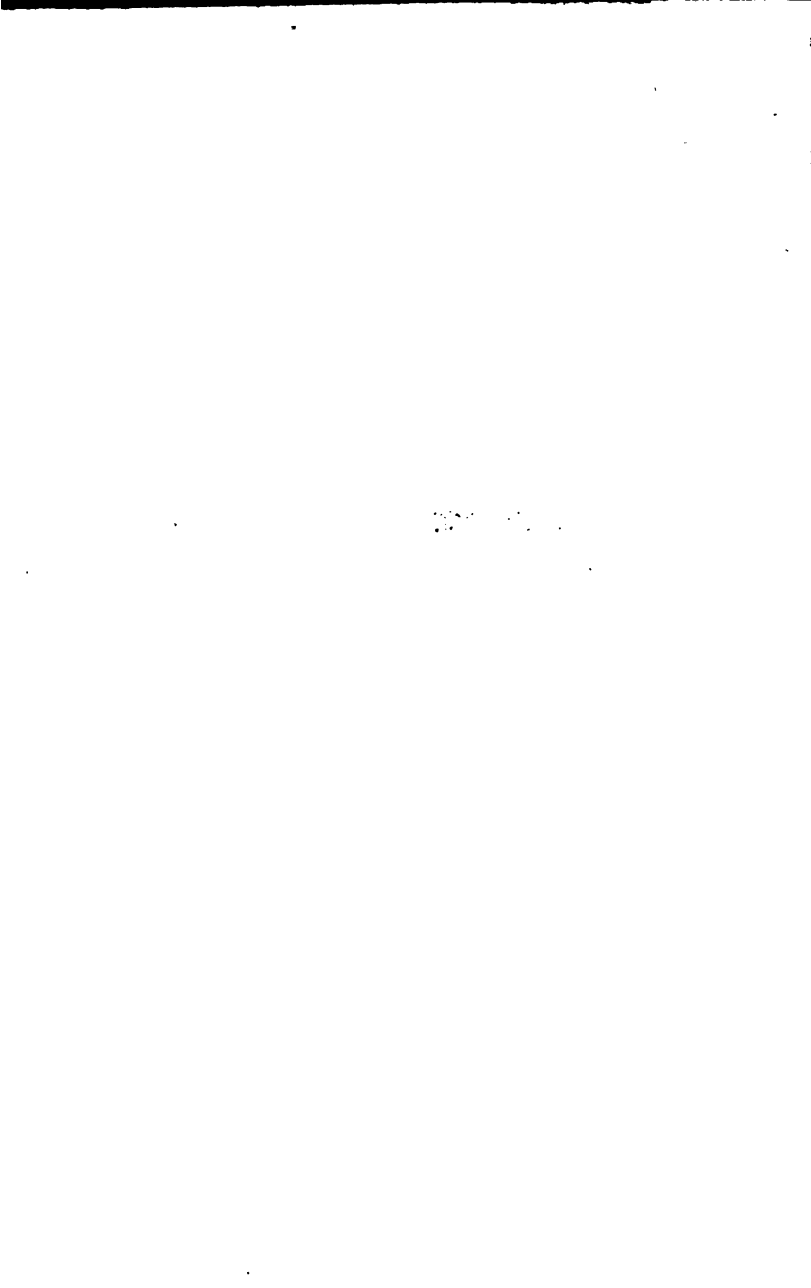
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